SEVENTEEN
SERMONS

Preach'd upon

Several Occaſions.

Never before Printed.

By *WILLIAM CLAGETT*, D. D.
Late Preacher to the Honourable Society of *Gray's* Inn, and one of His Majeſty's Chaplains in Ordinary.

With the SUMM of a CONFERENCE,
On *February* 21, 1686, between Dr. *Clagett* and Father *Gooden*, about the Point of Tranſubſtantiation.

LONDON:
Printed for *W. Rogers*, at the *Sun* in *Fleet-ſtreet*, over againſt St. *Dunſtan's* Church. 1689.

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BIBLIOTHECA BODLEIANA

THE PREFACE.

THere will need no more to recommend the following Diſcourſes to the Reader, than only to aſſure him he is not impoſed upon by the Title Page; but what is here preſented to him as Dr. Claget's *Sermons, are really ſo, being publiſhed from his own Papers, and by his own Brother.*

And indeed the Sermons themſelves do ſufficiently ſpeak their Author, for they every where expreſs the Spirit, the Judgment, and the Reaſoning of that Excellent Man; tho' ſome of them, perhaps, want that Finiſhing which his Maſterly Hand would have given them, had he been to have publiſhed them himſelf.

The firſt of theſe Sermons he meant to have Printed, if God had given him Life, being prevailed upon by the Importunity of ſeveral of his Friends, who then judged it very ſeaſonable.

The laſt in this Collection was the laſt Sermon he Preached. It was preached at St. Martins *in the Fields, on the day of his Lent-courſe there. And that very Evening he fell into that Sickneſs which put a period to his Life twelve days after.*

No Man perhaps in this Age of ſo private a Condition died more lamented. For as he had all the amiable charming Qualities to procure the Eſteem and Love of every one that knew him: So God had beſtowed upon him ſo many great and uſeful Talents, for the doing Service to Religion, to the Church, to all about him; And he ſo faithfully and induſtriouſly employed thoſe Talents to thoſe purpoſes, that he was really a Publick Bleſſing, and he had that Right done him, as to be eſteemed ſo.

He was born at St. Edmunds-Bury, Sept. 24. 1646. *being the Son of Mr.* Nicholas Claget, *then Miniſter there.*

His Univerſity-Education was at Emanuel *Colledge in* Cambridge.

His firſt Publick appearance in the World was at his own Native Town of Bury, *where he was choſen one of the Preachers. Which Office he diſcharged for ſeveral years with ſo univerſal a Reputation, that it might be truly ſaid as to him,* That a

Pro-

Prophet had Honour in his own Country.

From thence, at the Inſtance of ſome conſiderable Men of the Long Robe (whoſe Buſineß at the Aſſizes there, gave them Opportunities of being acquainted with his great Worth and Abilities) he was prevailed with to remove to Grays-Inn. *And indeed it was no ſmall Teſtimony given to his Merits, that he was thought worthy by that Honourable Society to ſucceed the Eminent Dr.* Cradock, *as their Preacher.*

In this Place he continued all the remainder of his Life, and he behaved himſelf worthily in it; and the Gentlemen of that Houſe took all Occaſions of declaring that he did ſo, by the conſtant Kindneß they expreſſed to him while he lived, and the Reſpects they paid him at his Death.

He had indeed at the time of his Death two other Preferments beſides that of Grays-Inn. *The Lord Keeper* North *(his Wives Kinſman) had given him a Living in* Buckingham-ſhire; *but the other Place was that which he himſelf moſt valued next to* Grays-Inn, *and that was the Lecture of* Baſſiſhaw, *to which he was choſen by that Pariſh about two years before his death. It was the Lecture which*

Dr. Calamy *had immediately held before him. Never was there two greater Men ſucceſſively Lecturers of one Pariſh; nor ever was any Pariſh kinder to two Lecturers.*

Dr. Claget *dyed of the Small-Pox,* March 28*th. and was buried in the Church of St.* Michael Baſſiſhaw.

His Wife, Mrs. Thomaſin North, *a moſt Vertuous and Accompliſh'd Woman, dyed eighteen days after him of the ſame Diſeaſe, and was buried in the ſame Grave with him.*

There is this little Paſſage not unfit to be mentioned here. The laſt Sermon Dr. Claget *made,* (*tho' not the laſt he preached*) *was that which is the ſixteenth in this Collection, upon this Text,* Shall we receive good at the hands of God, and ſhall we not receive evil? *This Sermon he made upon occaſion of the death of a Child of his that happened a little before. And he had writ it fairly out, I ſuppoſe for this end, that his Wife might read it. And accordingly ſhe did ſo, but upon a much ſadder Occaſion: For it was after his death that ſhe got this Sermon into her hands; and then ſhe made it her continual Entertainment* (*and a ſeaſonable one it was*) *as long as her ſtrength would ſuffer her.*

But

But to return to Dr. Claget. *We owe it to the Society of* Grays-Inn, *that he was brought to this City: But after he came hither, his own Merits in a little time rendred him ſufficiently conſpicuous.*

For ſo innocent and unblameable was his Life, ſuch an unaffected Honeſty and Simplicity appear'd in all his Converſation; ſo obliging he was in his Temper, ſo ſincere in all his Friendſhips, ſo ready to do all ſorts of good Offices that came in his way; and withal ſo Prudent a Man, ſo good a Preacher, ſo dexterous in untying Knots, and making hard things plain, ſo happy in treating of common Subjects in an uncommon and yet uſeful way. So able a Champion for the True Religion againſt all Oppoſers whatſoever; and laſtly, ſo ready upon all occaſions to Adviſe, to Direct, to Encourage any work that was undertaken for the promoting or defending the Cauſe of God. I ſay, all theſe Qualities were ſo eminent in Dr. Claget, *that it was impoſſible they ſhould be hid. The Town ſoon took Notice of him, and none that intimately knew him could forbear to love and admire him; and ſcarce any that had heard of him, to eſteem and honour him.*

If the Reader would know more of Doctor Claget, *let him peruſe thoſe Wri-*

tings of his, which he Publiſhed himſelf. By them he will in ſome meaſure be able to make a Judgment of the Genius and Abilities of the Man.

If a Friend can ſpeak without partiality, there doth in thoſe Writings appear ſo ſtrong a Judgment, ſuch an admirable Faculty of Reaſoning, ſo much Honeſty and Candor of Temper, ſo great plainneſs and perſpicuity, and withal ſo much ſpirit and quickneſs; and, in a word, all the Qualities that can recommend an Author, or render his Books Excellent in their kind; That I ſhould not ſcruple to give Dr. Claget *a place among the moſt Eminent and Celebrated Writers of this Church. And if he may be allowed that, it is as great an Honour as can be done him. For perhaps from the inſpired Age to this, the World did never ſee more Accurate, and more Judicious Compoſures in matters of Religion, than the Church of* England *has produced in our days.*

The

The Diſcourſes writ and publiſhed by Dr. Claget, *are theſe that follow.*

A Diſcourſe concerning the Operations of the Holy Spirit; in Anſwer to Dr. *O.* 1677. *Octavo.*

A Second Part. 1680.

A Reply to a Pamphlet, called, *The Miſchief of Impoſitions*: Writ by Mr. *A.* againſt the Dean of St. *Pauls.* 1681. *Quarto.*

An Anſwer to the Diſſenters Objections againſt the Common-Prayers. 1683. *Quarto.*

The Difference of the Caſe between the Separation of Proteſtants from the Church of *Rome*, and the Separation of Diſſenters from the Church of *England.* 1683. *Quarto.*

A Diſcourſe concerning the Invocation of the B. Virgin, and the Saints. 1686. *Quarto.*

A Paraphraſe with Notes on the Sixth Chapter of St. *John*, againſt Tranſubſtantiation 1686. *Quarto.*

A Diſcourſe concerning the pretended Sacrament of Extream Unction. With a Letter to the Vindicator of the Biſhop of *Condom.* 1687. *Quarto.*

A

A Second Letter to the Vindicator of the Bishop of *Condom*. 1687. *Quarto*.

A View of the whole Controversie between the Representer and the Answerer; in which are laid open some of the Methods by which Protestants are Misrepresented by Papists. 1687. *Quarto*.

An Answer to the Representer's Reflections upon the state and view of the Controversie, &c. Shewing that the Vindicator has utterly ruined the new Design of Expounding and Representing Popery. 1688. *Quarto*.

Queries concerning the *English* Reformation answered. 1688. *Quarto*.

The School of the *Eucharist*, a Translation; the Preface writ by Dr. *Claget*.

Of the Humanity and Charity of Christians. A Sermon Preached at the *Suffolk* Feast, in St. *Michael Cornhil*, *London*, *Nov.* 30. 1686.

J. S.

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SERMON I.

Rev. II. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

AND to the Angel of the church in Pergamus, write, these things ſaith he, which hath the ſharp ſword with two edges:

I know thy works, and where thou dwelleſt, even where Satan's ſeat is; and thou holdeſt faſt my Name, and haſt not denied my faith even in thoſe days wherein Antipas was my faithful martyr, who was ſlain amongſt you, where Satan dwelleth.

But I have a few things againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt there them that hold the doctrine of Balaam, who taught Balak to caſt a ſtumbling-block before the Children of Iſrael, to eat things ſacrificed to Idols, and to commit fornication.

So haſt thou alſo them that hold the doctrine of the Nicolaitans, which thing I hate.

Repent, or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight againſt them with the ſword of my mouth.

SERMON II, *and* III.

Matth. XVIII. 7.

Wo unto the world because of offences; for it must needs be that offences come; but wo unto that man by whom the offence cometh.

SERMON IV.

Matth. XXVI. 41.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.

SERMON V.

Matth. IV. 10.

Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.

SERMON VI.

Gen. XXII. 12.

Now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not with-held thy son, thine only son from me.

SERMON VII.

Matth. XV. 1, 2, 3.

Then came to Jesus Scribes and Pharisees, which were at Jerusalem, saying, Why do

do thy Diſciples tranſgreſs the tradition of the Elders, for they waſh not their hands when they eat bread. But he anſwered and ſaid unto them, Why do ye alſo tranſgreſs the commandment of God by your tradition?

SERMON VIII.

1 Cor. XI. 19.

For there muſt be Hereſies alſo amongſt you, that they which are approved may be made manifeſt among you.

SERMON IX.

2 Pet. I. 19.

We have alſo a more ſure ward of Prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that ſhineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the ſtar ariſe in your hearts.

SERMON X.

1 Cor. XII. 13.

For by one ſpirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one ſpirit.

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SERMON XI.

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But in the fourth generation they ſhall come hither again; for the iniquities of the Amorites is not yet full,

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Luke XIII. 5.

I tell you, Nay: but except you repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

SERMON XIII.

Luke XVIII. 8.

Nevertheleſs, when the Son of Man cometh, ſhall he find faith on the earth?

The XIV. an Aſſize-Sermon, preached at St. *Mores* in *Bury*, 1678.

Levit. XIX. 12.

Ye ſhall not ſwear by my Name falſly.

The XV Sermon preached at *Windſor*, before the Princeſs of *Denmark*.

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And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

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Job XI. 10.

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The Sum of a Conference on *Feb.* 21*ſt.* 1686. between Dr. *Claget* and Father *Gooden*, about the Point of Tranſubſtantiation.

Imprimatur.

February 5, 1688.

Hen. Maurice, R^mo in Chriſto P. D. *Wil.* Archiepiſc. *Cant.* à Sacris.

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The First Sermon.

REVEL. II. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

And to the Angel of the Church in Pergamos, *write, these things saith he, which hath the sharp sword with two edges:*

I know thy works, and where thou dwellest, even where Satans seat is; and thou holdest fast my Name, and hast not denied my faith, even in those days wherein Antipas *was my faithful Martyr, who was slain among you, where Satan dwelleth.*

But I have a few things against thee, because thou hast there them that hold the Doctrine of Balaam, *who taught* Balak *to cast a stumbling-block before the Children of* Israel, *to eat things sacrificed to Idols, and to commit fornication.*

So hast thou also them that hold the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans, *which thing I hate.*

Repent, or else I will come unto thee quickly, and will fight against them with the sword of my mouth.

THAT the seven Churches of the Proconsular *Asia*, to which our Lord sent these several Messages by Saint

John, were then in being, when he ſaw this Viſion and heard theſe words, is a matter, I think, beyond queſtion; and therefore there is little reaſon to queſtion whether in theſe Meſſages the then preſent ſtate of thoſe Churches were deſcribed: and whether the deſign of our Lord was likewiſe to deſcribe the ſtate of the Church from the days of the Apoſtles to the end of the World, in ſeveral intervals thereof, as ſome men think, I dare not take upon me to deny. Sure I am, that in theſe Epiſtles to the ſeven Churches, there are Inſtructions no leſs uſeful for all Ages of the Church, than if they were as truly prophetical, as they are hiſtorical; and that they were deſigned not only for the Information of the then preſent Churches of the Proconſular *Aſia*, but for the Edification of all Churches in all places, and in all Ages of the World, is evident from that ſo often repeated cloſe, *He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit ſaith unto the Churches*. Every Church therefore, becauſe it can hear, ought to hear; and every man of every Church, becauſe every man hath an ear to hear: And becauſe this Exhortation is alſo added to the Epiſtle ſent to the Church of *Pergamos*, part of which I have

now

now read to you, I may alſo exhort you to hear, or rather I need not, ſince our Lord Jeſus himſelf hath required you ſo to do.

St. *John*, who had been the Founder of the Church of *Pergamos*, was now in the Iſle of *Patmos* banished thither for the Teſtimony of Jeſus, as he witneſſeth himſelf, *chap.* 1. *ver.* 9. *I John, who alſo am your brother and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jeſus Chriſt, was in the Iſle that is called* Patmos, *for the Word of God, and for the Teſtimony of Jeſus Chriſt.* But he had committed this Church to the care of a Biſhop in his abſence, who is here called *the Angel of the Church*, and to whom this Epiſtle was directed in behalf of the Church under his care; and it conſiſts of theſe three general parts:

I. Of *a Commendation.*
II. Of *a Reproof.*
III. *A Warning to Repent.*

I. *A Commendation: I know thy works, and where thou dwelleſt, even where Satan's ſeat is; and thou holdeſt faſt my name, and haſt not denied my faith, even in thoſe days wherein* Antipas *was my faithful Martyr, who was ſlain among you where*

Satan dwelleth. Which Commendation consists of two parts.

1. That the Church of *Pergamos* retained the profession of the Name of Christ in all points necessary to the being of a Church; for if she had parted with any point necessary, she must then have ceased to be a Church: but a Church she was by our Lord's own acknowledgment, and therefore by *holding fast his Name*, and *not denying his Faith*, we must needs understand, that she had kept intire that *form of sound words*, the Apostolical Creed which St. *John* had left amongst them.

2. That which heightned her praise, was, that she had done this in such a place where there was so great Temptations to Apostacy: First, *Where Satan's seat was*, (*i. e.*) where there were so many *Idol-Temples*, that no place in *Asia* could shew so many; as if *Pergamos* had been Satan's Principal Court in that part of the World. Secondly, Where by consequence there was likely to be, and where indeed there was a great Persecution of the Gospel, under which *Antipas a faithful Martyr* of Jesus Christ, whose Zeal and Courage was an Example to the rest, *was slain*. This is the Commendation of the Church

of

of *Pergamos*, that in ſuch a place, and at ſuch a time, ſhe had held faſt the Profeſſion of the fundamental Truths of the Goſpel, that ſhe had held faſt the Name of Chriſt, and had not denied his Faith. But there follows,

II. *A Reproof: But I have a few things againſt thee, becauſe thou haſt there them that hold the Doctrine of* Balaam, *who taught* Balak *to caſt a ſtumbling-block before the Children of* Iſrael *to eat things ſacrificed to Idols, and to commit fornication. So haſt thou alſo them that hold the Doctrine of the* Nicolaitans, *which thing I hate.* (*i. e.*) Although ſhe had the foundation of the Faith, yet within the Communion of that Church the Doctrine of *Balaam*, and the Doctrine of the *Nicolaitans* was taught and practiſed: She had ſuffered damnable Doctrines and wicked Practices to take place, which were likely enough to endanger the ſubverting of the whole Chriſtian Faith profeſſed amongſt them. But more particularly,

1. The Doctrine of *Balaam* was openly taught amongſt them; and that was, the lawfulneſs of joyning with Idolaters in the Worſhip of their Idols; for this was

the *Stumbling-block* which *Balaam* laid before the Children of *Israel*, not only drawing them to carnal fornication with the Daughters of *Moab*, but spiritual fornication also with their Idols. Now it seems there was such a grievous Persecution of the Church at *Pergamos*, that some of that Communion, to ease the Church from it, taught that it was lawful to sacrifice to Idols, and to have External Communion with Idolaters in their Worship, to wit, by eating things sacrificed to Idols, pretending, as we may gather from the Commendation given them in the former verse, that if they did but still hold fast the Name of Christ, and not deny any necessary point of his Faith, their External Compliance with Idolaters in their Worship, would not deserve any severe Reproof; but that because they should still retain the Name and Essence of a true Church, they should therefore sufficiently approve their fidelity to Christ, notwithstanding their burning Incense, and offering Sacrifice, and giving Divine Honours by their outward Acts, to that which is not God.

2. The Doctrine of the *Nicolaitans* was also held amongst them, that is, a Doctrine that tended to a licencious Life,

and

and the corruption of good Manners; and it is called *the Doctrine of the Nicolaitans*, from *Nicolas* the Deacon, who being upbraided for doting too much upon his fair Wife, to ſhew that he was not to be blamed upon that account, made a proſtitution of her to all Comers: which lewd Example had, it ſeems ſpread its Contagion into ſome of the *Aſian* Churches, eſpecially at *Pergamos*, where many of them held Community of Women to be lawful; which was ſo vile and deteſtable a Doctrine, that God is here ſaid to hate it: So that the Doctrines for tolerating of which, the Church of *Pergamos* is here reprehended, were ſuch as grated very near upon the Foundations of Chriſtianity, the former leading to Idolatry, the latter to an impure and vicious Life. A very ſtrange corruption of the State of that Church, in ſo ſhort a time from the firſt plantation of it! Now,

III. We have in this Meſſage of Jeſus to the Church of *Pergamos*, *a warning to repent*, and to make haſte to repent too: *Repent, or elſe I will come unto thee quickly, and fight againſt them with the ſword of my mouth.* And what was ſhe to repent of, but of ſuffering thoſe Coruptions

in Doctrine and Practice to prevail in her Communion, for which ſhe was reproved before? And how was ſhe to repent, but by reforming thoſe Abuſes, and caſting out of her Communion thoſe that would not be reformed, and returning to the Primitive Purity of her Faith, and Worſhip, and Manners? And if ſhe would not do this, Jeſus threatned that he would ſuddenly take the matter into his own hands, and cut them off by the Sword of his mouth, from being a Church at all, who were ſo ſoon degenerated from a pure Church; and it is reaſonable to believe, that upon this warning ſhe did repent and reform: for ſhe was not ſpeedily cut off, as God had threatned ſhe ſhould be, if ſhe did not repent, but continued a Church for many Ages afterwards, till at length falling again into great corruptions of Doctrine and Manners, ſhe, with all the other ſix Churches of *Aſia*, written to by our Lord, fell to be no Church at all; and the Temples, wherein the Name of Chriſt was called upon, are now become Turkiſh *Moſques*: and ſo the burden of *Pergamos* was fulfilled.

And

And now having given you this Account of the State of the Church of *Pergamos*, as it was repreſented by our Lord himſelf, I am much miſtaken, if from this Authority we may not be able to juſtifie the Reformation of the Church of *England*, againſt the moſt ſpecious and popular Exceptions which they of *Rome* make againſt our Reformation: And this I ſhall endeavour to do under theſe three heads.

Firſt, That in this Church, whilſt it was in Communion with, and Subjection to the Church of *Rome*, there were notorious Abuſes and Errours both in Doctrine and Worſhip, added to the Profeſſion of the Common Faith.

Secondly, That upon this Suppoſition we might and ought to reform our ſelves, as we have done.

Thirdly, That the main Objections which they of the *Roman* Church do bring, and whereby they ſeek to ſtagger thoſe of our Communion, and to fright them into their own, may by this inſtance of the Meſſage of Chriſt to the Church of *Pergamos*, be demonſtrated to be vain

vain and fallacious and therefore by no means fit to remove us from our ſtedfaſtneſs.

Firſt, That in this Church, as in all others that were in Communion with the Church of *Rome*, there were notorious Abuſes and Errours introduced into the Faith and Worſhip of Chriſtians: And firſt, as in the Church of *Pergamos*, ſo in theſe Churches there were Doctrines and Practices leading to Idolatry; I wiſh that were all, but it is not all: for Idolatry it ſelf, if it be poſſible for us to know what it is, was practiſed, and that practice not only connived at, but encouraged and commanded; and of this ſort were the practices of *Adoring the Hoſt*, *Praying to Saints, to dead Men and Women*, and *Worſhipping of Images*, contrary to the whole tenor of the Scripture providing, that we ſhould *worſhip the Lord our God*, and that *him only we ſhould ſerve*. And it is very obſervable, that when we urge them with theſe things, they defend themſelves from Idolatry by the uſe of ſuch diſtinctions, as 'tis impoſſible for the common People to ſave themſelves by, if indeed theſe diſtinctions would do the buſineſs. As for Doctrines tending to licentiouſneſs

neſs of Life and Manners, what can be more evidently ſuch, than the eaſie terms upon which they promiſed forgiveneſs of ſins, and ſecurity from Hell; *Confeſſion to a Prieſt with attrition* being reckoned ſufficient to receive a Pretorial Abſolution, which ſhall be valid in Heaven, as alſo the invention of *Purgatory*, and the Power of the Church to ſhorten the pains of it by *Indulgences*, by applying the *treaſure of the Churches Merits*, by *Maſſes* and Prayers, with a great many abuſes of this nature? And beſides all theſe, what ſhall we ſay to their Doctrine of *Tranſubſtantiation*, their *Half Communion*, their *Latin Service*, their *Sacrifice of the Maſs*, for which there is no Preſident or Rule in the Scriptures, or in Antiquity; but plain and full conſent there is both of the one, and of the other againſt them? But now to all this, they make one general Reply, and tell us, that the Church, meaning the *Roman* Church, hath not erred in theſe points, becauſe ſhe cannot err at all; for ſhe is the *Mother* and *Miſtriſs* of all Churches, and the Standard of Catholick Unity and Faith; ſhe is that *One Catholick Church*, which cannot fail, to which Chriſt has promiſed his perpetual Preſence and Aſſiſtance, that

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the gates of Hell ſhall never prevail againſt her; and of which St. *Paul* ſaid, that ſhe is *the pillar and ground of the Truth.* In a word, that whatſoever is by her defined, is infallibly true, and therefore that theſe Doctrines and Practices are neither damnable errors and ſins, nor errors and ſins at all. Now if indeed ſuch promiſes were made to that Church, we ſhould be brought into a very great ſtrait, and not very well know whether we ſhould believe the Scripture ſpeaking againſt the Doctrines and Practices impoſed by that Church, or the Scripture ſpeaking to us to believe and do, as that Church requires: But firſt of all, we ſay, that whatſoever Promiſes were made to the Catholick Church, they do not belong only to the Church of *Rome*, which is but a part of it; and that theſe Promiſes, that *the gates of Hell ſhould not prevail againſt the Church*, and that Chriſt *would be with his Church to the end of the world*, amounted to no more than this, that ſhe ſhould be preſerved from ſo much error, as would utterly deſtroy the Being of a Church, not from all Error whatſoever; but that no Promiſe in particular was made to the Church of *Rome*, ſo much as to ſecure her from funda-

fundamental Errors utterly deſtructive of the Being of a Church, eſpecially ſince St. *Paul* writing to the Church of *Rome*, plainly ſuppoſes, that it was poſſible for them to be quite cut off from the Body of Chriſt, *Rom.* 11. 21, 22. where ſpeaking of the rejection of the *Jews*, he hath theſe words: *For if God ſpared not the natural branches, take heed leſt he alſo ſpare not thee. Behold therefore the goodneſs and ſeverity of God: on them which fell, ſeverity; but towards thee goodneſs, if thou continue in his goodneſs: otherwiſe thou alſo ſhalt be cut off.* Which had been vain words, if it had been impoſſible by virtue of any Priviledge conferred upon the See of *Peter* for the Church of *Rome* not to *continue in God's goodneſs*, or it be an infallible truth, that ſhe ſhall not be *cut off*. We do what we can to find the Infallibility of the *Roman* Church in the Scriptures; but if we cannot find it, there is much more reaſon to conclude, that ſhe hath erred, becauſe ſome of her Doctrines and Practices do ſeem to us apparently to contradict the Scripture, than to believe ſhe is infallible, becauſe ſhe ſays ſo of her ſelf. But to this they ſay, that we miſ-interpret thoſe Scriptures, which ſeem to condemn what they profeſs

ſes and practiſe, and in ſhort, that we cannot arrive to certainty of the true ſence of Scripture, without the Teſtimony of an Infallible Interpreter, which the Church is. Well, for the preſent I will ſuppoſe this; but then this will be the conſequence of the Suppoſition, that 'tis impoſſible for that Church ever to convince me, or any reaſonable man of her own Infallibility by the Scriptures: For when ſhe tells me that Chriſt hath ſaid, *Thou art Peter, and upon this Rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it*, and that the *Church is the pillar and ground of truth*, and *Lo I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world*; ſhe ſuppoſes that the Promiſe of Infallibility to her ſelf is ſo plainly made, that every man, who has a mind to underſtand the truth, may be certain of the true ſence of the words. But if I may arrive at a certain ſence of theſe Scriptures, without the Teſtimony of an Infallible Interpreter, then why may I not be as certain of the ſence of other Texts, as plain as theſe, without ſuch an Interpreter? It ſeems to me, that our Saviour ſaid, *Drink ye All of this*, and therefore that you of the *Roman* Church may as well take the Bread, as the Cup from the Laity.

Laity. It ſeems to me, that St. *Paul* calls the *Communion of Chriſt's Body, Bread*; *The* BREAD *which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Chriſt*: and your Church ſays, 'tis Bread no longer after Conſecration. It ſeems to me, that the ſame *St. Paul* ſpeaks for a whole Chapter againſt Praying in an Unknown Tongue, and yet your Church doth it. It ſeems alſo to me, that the Author to the *Hebrews* doth abſolutely ſay, That *Chriſt was offered once for all*, and that *he ſat down thenceforth at the right hand of God*; but you pretend to fetch him down from Heaven, and offer him a thouſand times in a day. It ſeems to me, that God has forbidden the making of Images to worſhip them, as abſolutely and univerſally, as words could do it, and yet you picture God, and make Similitudes of the Bleſſed Trinity, and Images of the Saints, and worſhip them when you have done: I demand now why I may not be certain of the true ſence of theſe places upon as reaſonable grounds, as you ſuppoſe I may be of thoſe, which in your judgment conclude for the Infallibility of your Church? If I may, then I am ſure the Scripture condemns what you ſay and do in theſe points; but if I may not be reaſon-

reaſonably aſſured, that I underſtand theſe (in my judgment) plain places of Scripture, becauſe I want an Infallible Judge to interpret for me, then I demand again, why do you urge me with thoſe Scriptures, that, as you pretend, prove the Infallibility of your Church? for as yet I am not perſwaded of the Infallibility thereof, though I would gladly be perſwaded of it. If you ſay, this is the interpretation of the Church concerning them, which is Infallible, and therefore you are to believe it, I think any body but a Child, would reply, that that is the very thing in queſtion; and therefore that you cannot convince any man of your Infallibility, unleſs he will take your word for it, becauſe he cannot infallibly know the true ſence of Scripture giving teſtimony to it; before he believes it without any teſtimony from Scripture at all: So that it is to no purpoſe to go about to perſwade any reaſonable man, that your Church is Infallible, till he doth already believe it, that is, till it is a needleſs thing to do it, becauſe he does believe it already. And therefore when all is done, we muſt be content to underſtand the plain places of Scripture, without an Infallible Judge, and to find out the reſt,

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as well as we can; and if the Scripture plainly condemns what you say and do, we have more reason from thence to conclude that you have erred, than to conclude that you cannot err, because you say so of your selves.

And indeed I look upon this Pretence to infallibility, to be an Errour of the most pernicious consequence, because it seals them up under all the rest, and adds incorrigibleness, which is the highest degree of obstinacy, to all their other Errours; and it is so much the more shameless, because the whole World that was in Communion with them, groaned for a Reformation before the Council of *Trent*. One of their own Popes said, "We confess many abominable Abuses "and Grievances have been for these ma- "ny years last past in the Holy See; and "we look upon our selves concerned to "endeavour a Reformation the more, "because we see the whole World doth "most earnestly desire it. At the Coun- cil of *Trent* the Embassadours of several Princes desired earnestly the Cup for the People, the Marriage of the Clergy, Ser- vice in a known Tongue, and the Refor- mation of divers other matters; in which Christendom would have reformed it self,

if *Italy* would have ſuffered it: *Italy*, I ſay, who to hinder a general Reformation, filled the Council of *Trent* with more Biſhops, than came from all the parts of Chriſtendom beſides.

Secondly, Upon this Suppoſition the Church of *England* might and ought to reform it ſelf, as it hath done: for we find that the Church of *Pergamos*, which was not over-run with ſo many falſe Doctrines and corrupt Practices, as thoſe of the *Roman* Church I have mentioned, was required by our Lord Jeſus himſelf to remove thoſe Errours and Corruptions which had crept into her; and if ſhe did not preſently return to her Primitive Purity, ſhe was threatned to be cut off. Indeed it had been a much more deſirable thing, that the whole *Weſtern* Church, and more deſirable ſtill, that the *Eaſt* and the *Weſt* had both united in a Reformation; it had been a bleſſed thing, if by a Free and General Council of all the Biſhops in the Chriſtian World, an Univerſal Reformation had been made; but the latter perhaps was improbable, by reaſon of the vaſt diſtances of ſome Chriſtian Churches from one another; and the former was made impoſſible, by the over-ruling Power of

of *Italy*: which therefore was to be done upon particular Churches, by common consent; and perhaps there must never be a farther Reformation till the Day of Judgment. It was very reasonable, and very necessary therefore, that Christian Kingdoms should proceed in Provincial and National Councils, to reform themselves, as this Church hath done under her Kings and Bishops, Parliaments and Convocations; that is, by all that Authority which could be desired to make a publick Reformation within the limits of this particular Church. And this proceeding has been authorized by the Examples of the best Ages of the Church, when it was thought fit not always to tarry for General Councils, but very often for particular Churches to proceed out of hand to the rooting out of Errour and Heresie, and to the reforming of whatsoever they thought amiss amongst themselves: and for this, we are to appeal to the Councils of *Laodicea*, *Gangra*, *Carthage*, and many others, which are no General Councils.

To conclude: Such Errours as had overspread the Church before the Reformation, were in their own nature, and in their consequences, so pernicious, that e-

very Christian Man ought to reform himself from them, inasmuch as *it is better to obey God than man*: Much more might a publick Reformation be made by due Authority.

But we had no regard to the Bishop of *Rome* in this matter, who was to be considered either as Head of the whole Church, or the Patriarch of the *West*, or as the Converter of the *English* Nation; and we were not only in Communion with him, but in subjection to him, when the Reformation was made: so that what cause soever there might be for it, the Reformation was however schismatical.

To all which, I answer in short:

1. As to the Universal Supremacy, it is a point to which Antiquity is wholly a stranger; Scripture and the Fathers say nothing of it: *Ignatius*, who so often requires, that *nothing should be done of moment in the Church, without the Bishop*, would have found out some one occasion at least to have said, *Let nothing be done without the Bishop of* Rome, if he had known of any such Priviledge and Power conferred on him by our Lord. But if *Pergamos* were justifiable in removing those Corruptions which were crept into

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to that Church, without ſtaying for the conſent of the Biſhop of *Rome*; *England*, in removing more Corruptions, and of equal danger, was to proceed alſo without his leave, if it could not be had.

2. As to his Patriarchal Power over this Nation, it did not anciently belong to him; he had it not, when the Council of *Nice* confined him to his own Province, nor when the Council of *Epheſus* decreed, That no Biſhop ſhould preſume to invade any other Province, which from the beginning had not been under his or his Predeceſſor's Juriſdiction; or if any do, and make it his own by force, that he ſhould reſtore it. And then the Church of *Britain* was free, acknowledging no foreign Juriſdiction; the Power that the Biſhop of *Rome* gained here in after-Ages, was got by fraud and held by force, and was ever and anon diſputed, and gainſayed, and over-rul'd; and ſurely no injury was done him, when that Authority was reſumed, which he had uſurped.

3. As to the Converſion of the *Saxons* by *Auſtin*, ſent hither by Pope *Gregory*, I ſay, it follows not, if long ſince the Inhabitants of this Iſland received any benefit from *Rome*, therefore they ſhould in

all Ages be expoſed to the Uſurpations of that place afterwards; nor that becauſe we once received true Religion from *Rome*, therefore Poſterity muſt receive alſo falſe Doctrines from thence, when it ſhould pleaſe her to ſend them hither: But in truth Chriſtianity had been planted here long before, by St. *Paul* himſelf in all probability, and that in the Reign of *Tiberius*, before *Rome* her ſelf had received the Chriſtian Faith. And the *Britiſh* Biſhops, whom *Auſtin* found here, would by no means ſubmit to the Authority of the *Roman* Legate.

And ſo much for the right that this particular Church had to reform her ſelf. I come now,

Thirdly, To conſider ſome of thoſe ſpecious Pretences and Objections by which they go about to weaken the ſtedfaſtneſs of our People in the Communion of our Church, and to draw them to theirs:

1. They ſay, How was it poſſible that Errours could creep into the Church, of that nature with thoſe which we charge upon them? There muſt have been great Oppoſition made to any the leaſt deſign of ſuch an alteration in the State of Religion;

gion; and we meet with no ſuch account of things in Hiſtory: Therefore theſe are not Innovations, but the ancient Doctrine and Practice of the Church. To omit this, that concerning moſt of their Innovations, we can very nearly ſhew the time when they were brought in, but can plainly ſhew, that there was a time when they were not. I anſwer, It is much more eaſie to conceive, that in a thouſand years time Errour ſhould creep into that Church by degrees, and without noiſe, than that in a Church planted by an Apoſtle, as *Pergamos* was, guarded by the *Angel* or Biſhop placed there by an Apoſtle, as *Pergamos* was, ſhould ſo ſoon tolerate the Doctrines of the *Balaamites* and *Nicolaitans*, even while their Apoſtle was alive, and therefore very ſoon after he departed from them.

2. They ſay, that the perpetual Succeſſion of their Biſhops from St. *Peter*, is an Argument of the Succeſſion of true Doctrine amongſt them in the purity thereof; but behold an Apoſtolical Church, in which a Biſhop ſucceeded an Apoſtle yet alive, corrupted in her Doctrine and Worſhip! Can they have greater, can they have as great an aſſurance of a perpetual uninterrupted Succeſſion, after ſo many

Ages, as the Church of *Pergamus* had, before one Age was gone? or does their Infallibility grow with their Succeſſion? or, the farther they are removed from the beginning of the Church, are they the ſurer ſtill that they teach nothing, but what was taught at firſt?

3. They ſay, we are departed from the whole Church of Chriſt that was viſible every-where upon the face of the Earth, when the Reformation was begun, ſeeing there was then no Communion in the World, nor had been long before, that profeſſed the ſame Doctrine in all points, which the Reformation brought in. Now in great liberality to admit for once that the whole viſible Church had corrupted its way, as the Church of *Rome* has done, which yet is not true; but I ſay, admitting it, what will then come of it? That we departed from the whole Church of Chriſt? No: but that we departed from the general Errours and Corruptions of it, and by that could not be ſaid to depart from the whole Church, whereof we our ſelves were a part, unleſs we departed alſo from our ſelves. Nay, but ſay they, this is to fall into another damnable Errour, and that is, that the whole Church of Chriſt had failed from the Earth, and ſo that the viſible Church

Church had periſhed for ſome Ages, till the Reformation brought it to life again. Not ſo neither: For we do not ſay, that the Errours of the Church were of that nature, as to make it ceaſe to be a Church; but that they were in themſelves damnable, and that they made the Salvation of all that were in it, extreamly hazardous; but yet that we hope well of thoſe, who believing the fundamental Doctrines of Chriſtianity maintained in the Church, and wanting means to diſcover her Corruptions, ſerved God according to their knowledge: ſo that we do not ſay, the Church had periſhed, but that her Purity had been loſt, even as *Pergamos* was a Church, and ſo acknowledged by our Lord himſelf, becauſe ſhe held faſt the foundation of the Creed, while yet ſhe was corrupted with notorious Errors. To this, according to their uſual way of arguing, they would reply, that the caſe is not the ſame, between a Particular Church, as *Pergamos* was, and the whole Viſible Church, from which *Luther* and thoſe that followed him ſeparated themſelves: But then I would anſwer, That the caſe is the ſame, as to the matter we are upon; for if a particular Church, though under great Errours, may yet be a part of the whole Church,

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by like reaſons, if the whole Church were over-ſpread with foul Errours, it would nevertheleſs ſtill remain the whole Church, and there is as great an obligation to depart from thoſe Errors in the latter caſe, as in the former; and a particular Church by departing from ſuch Errors, does no more depart from the whole Church, than ſhe did from her ſelf.

4. They pretend Antiquity for their Errors, and are often asking that ſhrewd Queſtion, as they deem it, *Where was your Religion before* Luther? I would anſwer this Queſtion with another, That after the Angel of the Church of *Pergamos* had purged away the Corruptions of that Church, *Where was the Church of* Pergamos *before that Reformation?* Every one of common ſence would anſwer, It was where it is now, and where it ever was, ſince it was firſt a Church; for the Reformation took away nothing that belonged to the Nature and Eſſence of a Church, but only the Shame, and the Corruption of it. So I ſay, ſtill admitting, what yet can never be proved, that there was none for 500 Years together, that declared againſt the Abuſes and Errors that were crept into the Church; admitting this, I ſay, that our Church, before our Reformation,

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or even before *Luther* was, even amongſt our ſelves, where the *Roman* Corruptions had prevailed, only it was then a corrupted, now it is a reformed Church. That which makes *Rome* a true Church, is, that ſhe retains the Profeſſion of the Creeds, and the Adminiſtration of the Sacraments. That which makes her a corrupt Church, is, that ſhe has added as many more Articles of Faith, as there were before, and brought in Idolatrous Practices into her Worſhip. Such a true Church, and ſuch a corrupted Church, was this of *England* before the Reformation; but the Truth we have reſerved, and the Corruption we have caſt away, and ſo have added Purity to the Truth of our Chriſtian Communion; we have kept that which is ancient, thrown aſide that which was lately introduced, and ſo are a Church built upon the ſame Foundation that we were built upon before, but have thrown away the *Hay* and *Stubble* that was laid upon it. But if the inſtance of the Church of *Pergamos* be not ſufficient to anſwer this Queſtion, I ſhall add another to it, and that is *Hezekiah*'s Reformation, who *took away the High-places, burnt the Images, and cut down the Groves*, which had ſtood in all probability four or five hundred years,

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for this was the abatement of the commendation of good Kings before him, that *nevertheleſs the High-places were not taken away*: And moreover, this Corruption had ſpread itſelf from one end of *Judah* to the other. Here was univerſality of Places, and the Preſcription of ſome Ages, to give Authority to it; notwithſtanding which, *Hezekiah* to his immortal honour, made a Reformation. And now the Queſtion, *Where our Church was before* Luther? is juſt ſuch another as this would have been, *Where was the Church of* Judah *before* Hezekiah? And indeed ſuch a demand was made; But by whom do you think? Truly, by none of God's Church; but which is little for the credit of ſuch Queſtions, by *Rabſhakeh*, that great Blaſphemer of the God of *Iſrael*: For thus I find him ſpeaking to the *Jews*: *But if ye ſay unto me, We truſt in the Lord our God; is not that he, whoſe High-places, and whoſe Altars Hezekiah hath taken away, and hath ſaid to Judah and Jeruſalem, Ye ſhall Worſhip before this Altar in Jeruſalem?* 2 Kings 18. 22. By which Queſtion it is moſt apparent, that the corruption amongſt the People in this matter, had been ſo general, and ancient, that their Neighbours took this falſe Worſhip

ſhip of theirs, for their Religion; and therefore reckoned that *Hezekiah* had introduced a New Religion, becauſe he had but reform'd the Old. I need not make any application of ſo plain an inſtance.

5. They ſometimes ſay, That ſince we confeſs them to be a true Church, and conſequently to hold no Fundamental Errors, we ought to have tarried in a Church, in which we granted a poſſibility of Salvation; and we may now without danger return to their Communion. But it is plain, that not only thoſe Errors which do unchurch a People, but even thoſe that make their Salvation hazardous, are to be reformed: *Pergamos* was ſtill a Church, notwithſtanding her Errors; but yet was obliged to reform them.

6. *And laſtly*, Since we grant them to be a true Church, and Chriſt can have but one Church upon Earth, and there is but one Church, out of which there are no ordinary means of Salvation, we muſt conclude our ſelves to be no true Church, nor part of it, becauſe we are ſeparated from them, and conſequently to be cut off from the hope of Salvation. I anſwer, That there is indeed but one Catholick Church, as we confeſs in our Creed, whereof the Church of *Rome* is one part, and one

one of the worſt in the World, and the Church of *England* another, and perhaps one of the beſt. I do grant alſo, that Salvation is not to be ordinarily had out of the Catholick Church; but then I add, that in that part of it, which is beſt reformed, it is to be obtained with great ſafety and aſſurance; and in that part of it, which is very corrupt, and refuſes to be reformed, not without great difficulty and danger: And though theſe parts of the Church are ſeparated in Communion from one another, it does not follow, that either of them muſt be the Catholick Church, and the other no part of it at all; but that there is but one part which can free herſelf from the blame of the ſeparation, and that it concerns every Man, as much as his Soul is worth, to chuſe that Communion, which does not only afford him the means that are abſolutely neceſſary to Salvation, but thoſe alſo without the mixture of ſuch falſe Doctrines, and unlawful Practices, which nothing but invincible Ignorance, or Infirmity that is very pardonable, can reconcile with the hope of any Man's Salvation. But if they will not receive this Anſwer, but ſtill contend, that becauſe we charge each other with Hereſie and Schiſm, 'tis im-

impoſſible both parts can be within the Unity of the Catholick Church; and therefore that we granting them to be a true Church, muſt confeſs our ſelves to be none. I know not what they will get by this; but that if this be true, we muſt revoke all that charitable hopes of their Salvation, which we would fain nouriſh: If either they or we muſt needs be quite out of the Church, and can have no benefit by the Promiſes of the Goſpel, and the Covenant of Grace; doth it follow that therefore we muſt go over to their Communion? No: But it follows on the other ſide, that we have greater reaſon than we thought we had, to ſtay where we are; becauſe it ſeems, as they ſay, one part muſt needs be out of the Church, and want all means of Salvation. For we confeſs our ſelves to be much more ſure, that our Communion is a ſafe way to Salvation, than we are, that theirs is a way at all: And if they will not let us believe both together, inſtead of giving us a reaſon why we ſhould be *Papiſts*, they give us a new one, why we ſhould not. This I ſay, to ſhew only, what Anſwer they may get by trying to make an unreaſonable advantage to themſelves by our charity and moderation: not that I believe their Errors

rors have made them cease from being a part of the Church, any more than the Errors of *Pergamus* made her cease to be so; nor, that it is impossible the Reformed, and the Unreformed part of Christendom should be within the Pale of that one Church, which we profess to believe in the Creed, any more than it was impossible for the Church of *Pergamus* to have been a part of the Catholick Church, both before and after her Reformation.

And thus I have gone through the task I set my self, and I hope need to make no Apology for entertaining you with a Controversie of this nature, which indeed ought to be no Controversie amongst us. But if it were needful, I have this to say, Whereas the Church of *England* does not pretend to be an Infallible Guide or Judge, and yet requires the People to believe as she believes, to profess what she professeth, and to do what she injoyneth; it is very fit that her Ministers should sometimes make it plain, that she requires this, because she has reason so to do, and is not in these points deceived, though she does not pretend that she cannot err in any. I know not whether I have made the things I have discourst plain enough to every understanding; but whether that

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be ſo or not, yet every one may perceive, that we appeal to his Reaſon for the truth and honeſty of our Cauſe; and for my own part, if I underſtood nothing elſe of the Merits of it, I had rather be of a Church which pretends to guide me with Reaſon, than of another that would govern me without it, and that becauſe the former is likely to take more care not to miſlead me, than the latter needs to do, which when it has gained me to an implicit Faith, and a blind Obedience, may lead me whether ſhe pleaſes. As for what I have now ſaid, I declare in the preſence of God, that I have offered nothing to you, but what I believe my ſelf, and farther, that I am not conſcious to my ſelf of any reaſon, why I am fixed in the Communion of this Church in oppoſition to the other, but a full conviction of the Errours of that Church, which if I ſhould profeſs or practice, I could not entertain the leaſt hopes of Salvation: And we who are thus convinced, are as I take it, bound in conſcience to take ſeaſonable opportunities of confirming our Brethren in our Communion, and enabling them as well as we can, to make it appear, that the Arguments and the Anſwers of the other ſide are unſatisfactory

ry and vain, as I have in ſome part endeavoured to ſhew at this time.

We ſhould indeed not be unwilling to take pains to recover thoſe to the knowledge of the Truth, that are educated in damnable Errours; but there is much more reaſon to do all we can to retain thoſe in the profeſſion of the Truth, that have been educated in it; ſeeing if they revolt, we cannot have that hope of their Salvation, which we would fain have of theirs, who want ſufficient means to diſcover them.

It were a bleſſed ſtate of the Church indeed, if all being united in true Faith and Worſhip, we had nothing to do but to perſwade and exhort men, and to take care of them, that they live anſwerably thereto; but ſince we have two Works upon our hands, to guard you againſt Errour, as well as to warn you againſt a wicked Life, I do not ſee how we can diſcharge our Duty, but by doing one as well as the other: And that I may not ſay nothing to the latter, I am to tell you, in the Concluſion, that we do not make the Communion of the beſt Church in the World to be all in all; a man may go to Hell in the Communion of a pure Church; and without true Repentance and Reformation,

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on, the beſt and pureſt Church that ever was ſince the Goſpel began, could have done him no ſervice: And I take it to be as great a Corruption as can be readily thought of, for any Church to pretend to ſave men by a Trick, and ſend them to Heaven any other way than the plain way of keeping the Commandments of God, and our Saviour Jeſus Chriſt: Keep therefore the pure Profeſſion of the Chriſtian Faith, but withal, keep a good *Conſcience void of offence towards God, and towards man: Hold faſt the form of ſound words:* But ſtill remember, that if your *Works* be not anſwerable, your *Faith* is vain; For *not the hearers of the law, but the doers thereof ſhall be juſtified: Not he that ſaith, Lord Lord, ſhall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of our Father which is in Heaven.*

on, the best and purest Church that ever was since the Gospel began, could have done him no service: And I take it to be as great a Corruption as can be readily thought of, for any Church to pretend to save men by a Trick, and send them to Heaven any other way than the plain way of keeping the Commandments of God, and our Saviour Jesus Christ: Keep therefore the pure Profession of the Christian Faith, but withal, keep a good *Conscience void of offence towards God, and towards man: Hold fast the form of sound words:* But still remember, that if your *Works* be not answerable, your *Faith* is vain; For *not the hearers of the law, but the doers thereof shall be justified: Not be that faith, Lord Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven, but be that doth the will of our Father which is in Heaven.*

The Second Sermon.

MATTH. XVIII. 7.

Wo unto the World because of Offences; for it must needs be that Offences come; But wo to that man by whom the Offence cometh.

THE great end of the Gospel is to bring Mankind to Salvation, and in order thereunto to convert them from Sin and from all dangerous Error, and to lead them to a right Faith, and a Holy Life: But it is too evident, that this end is not attained Universally. And if any one should be tempted to suspect that the Christian Religion is not therefore a Divine Revelation, because it has in so great part failed of the end which it pretended to pursue; he may be easily brought to assurance again, by considering the vast good which Christianity hath done in the World, but especially by observing that the Go-

ſpel hath foretold, that all men would not believe and obey. Our Bleſſed Lord himſelf teſtified, that many were called, but few were choſen; and that ſtrait was the Gate and narrow the Way that leadeth to Life, and few there be that find it: Nay, inaſmuch as he hath forewarned us of a Day of Judgment, and hath told us beforehand, That the *word which he hath ſpoken, the ſame ſhould judge us at the laſt day.* This was a manifeſt Declaration, that he did not pretend to lead men to Faith and Repentance by ſuch means as could not but be effectual, but only by ſuch as were ſufficient, if we would in any meaſure comply with his gracious Methods; and it was alſo a plain intimation that a great many would be never the better, but the worſe for theſe means that God had provided for their Salvation; and that ſome for not receiving them, others for not improving them, would fall into greater Condemnation.

But our Saviour did not foretel theſe things only, but the *Cauſes* of them too, and what it was that would obſtruct the Progreſs and Deſign of his Religion. For this is the importance of thoſe words of his which I have now choſen for my Subject: *Wo be to the World becauſe of Offences;*

fences; for it must needs be that Offences come.

By Offences, or Scandals, we are here, and almost every-where in the New Testament, to understand those Temptations to Sin, and Inducements to Errour, which some men lay in the way of others: They are sometimes otherwise expresst, *Snares*, *Stumbling-blocks*, and *Occasions of Fallings*; for the thing meant by all these expressions is the same. Now concerning *Offences*; our Saviour affirms two things in the words I have read: First, That *they would come*; nay, that it *must needs* be that they would come; *i. e.* that men would arise who should hinder the prevailing of Christianity as much as in them lay, or pervert the Design of it, to the great danger of other mens Souls, who were not well established in the Truth. Secondly, That the consequence of these Scandals would be very sad and pernicious, that is, that very many would stumble at them, and be turned out of the right way. For this must be implied in those words, *Wo to the World because of Offences*: For, 1. It is no ordinary Misery or Calamity which is expressed in denouncing a *Wo*; and this Wo must likewise refer to those that

are turned aside by the Scandals and Temptations that others lay before them; because if Offences were not taken as well as given, it ſeems not eaſie to ſay why they ſhould produce ſo much Sin and Miſery as is implied in denouncing *Woe* upon their account. Beſides, our Saviour did *afterwards* expreſs the guilt and miſery of thoſe that ſhould give Offence, by itſelf, *But woe be to the man by whom the Offence cometh*; That is, to every man that by his own Wickedneſs laith a Stumbling-block in his Brother's way, and draws him into Sin. So that in the former part of this Verſe, that miſchief is expreſt which would come of Offences, becauſe they would be *taken*. And then, 2. it is alſo implied that the miſchief would not only be in itſelf great, but likewiſe of a very large extent; for it is ſaid Wo to the *World* becauſe of Offences; where by the *World* we cannot underſtand leſs than a very great part of Mankind, who ſhould be diverted by Offences, either from receiving the Goſpel at all, or from entertaining it in the Purity and Power thereof.

There are therefore theſe two Heads which I am to ſpeak to.

I. That Offences would certainly be given;

given; *It must needs be that Offences come.*

II. That they would do very great miſchief in the World: *Woe be to the World because of Offences.*

Which two Points being illuſtrated, I intend to apply them in order to farther Inſtruction.

I. That Offences would certainly be given; *It muſt needs be that Offences come.* By which words I do not underſtand, that it was abſolutely impoſſible but Offences muſt come; for God has not neceſſitated any man to Sin; but the meaning is this, that it was in it ſelf probable, and that in the higheſt degree, that Offences would come; and moreover, God certainly foreſaw that they would ariſe, if he did not interpoſe his Almighty Power to hinder them, which he determined not to do. And this is a ſufficient ground of the certainty of the Prediction; *It muſt needs be that Offences come.* Now the true notion of *Offence* being this, that it is an occaſion given whereby men are either diſcouraged from the Profeſſion of the Truth, or encourag'd Practices in contrary to it. I ſhall 1. lay before you ſome inſtances under this general Head: And 2. ſhew why it

was

was not to be expected but that Offences would be given.

The principal instances are such as these:

1. Opposing the Gospel with outward Violence, and making it the interest of men to renounce the Truth, as they love their Fortunes and their Lives: Of which our Saviour spake in the famous Parable of the Sower, where he explained him *that received the seed into thorny places*, to be one that *heareth the word, and with joy receiveth it, yet hath he not root in himself*; and not being fortified with deep resolution, *he dureth* but *for a while*; *for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended*, Matth. 13. 20, 21. This was that Offence which our Saviour warned his Disciples of more than of any other. He told them plainly beforehand, That they should be *delivered up to Councils, and brought before Governours, and be hated of all men for his Name's sake.* But says he, *He that endureth to the end shall be saved*; and *he that taketh not his Cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me*, Mat. 10. And this is in itself so great an Offence, or Stumbling-block, to put Men out of the right way, that sometimes the

the general word is used to signifie this particular instance only: Thus when our Saviour said, *Blessed is he, whoever shall not be offended in me*, Mat. 11. 6. The meaning is, Blessed is he whom the Example of *John* the Baptist's Sufferings, does not fright from being my Disciple. And thus when *Peter* said, *Though all men should be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended*, Matth. 26. 33. He explain'd his own meaning afterward, by saying, *Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee*, v. 35. But then,

2. Doctrines that give liberty to Lust, and that give ease to guilty Minds without reformation, are a very dangerous Offence; for they are framed at once to draw Men off from the Truth, and reconcile them to wicked Practice; and therefore they who are under the strongest inclinations to sin, and need the most powerful restraints, are most forward to receive them; *i. e.* they who will be sure to make the worst use of them. He that offers a Key to let Sinners into Heaven without Repentance, and keeping the Commandments of God, is sure to meet with sufficient Numbers that will not be over-forward to examine how he came by it. And this is that which makes all Doctrines

ctrines of this nature Offences, that they are grateful to the corrupt Inclinations of Mankind; not that they carry any appearance of Truth. It had been long enough ere Men could have been perſwaded, that particular Confeſſion of Sins to a Man in ſecret, with a bare purpoſe not to do the like again, will at any time ſuffice for the effect of Abſolution; if the belief of it were not as much for the eaſe of the People, as for the advantage of the Prieſt: Or that bodily Exercile, mere external Works, ſhould either be Godlineſs, or ſupply the want of it. Theſe things bear ſo hard againſt what we know of God by Reaſon, and by Scripture, that nothing but carnal Intereſt, and a deſire that they ſhould be true, could make way for them, and provide them Entertainment. And what Wonders that can do, was too evident in the beginning of Chriſtianity, when the *Gnoſtics* ſeduced no ſmall number of Diſciples, by giving liberty to fleſhly Luſts, and diſcharging them from all obligation to confeſs Chriſt, when they were to take up his Croſs.

3. The mixing of Falſhood with Truth, is another great Offence, tending to much Evil; as it meets with perſons diſpoſed either to overmuch Credulity, or

on too much Disgust. By the former, the false Doctrine or unlawful Practice is embraced, because found in the company of Truth; by the latter, Truth it self suspected, and perhaps thrown off, because it is disgraced with the company of Follies and Lyes. Thus the *Pharisees* recommended their absurd Traditions to the People, because in the same breath they taught them the Law of *Moses*. Thus some of the *Gentiles* were ready to reject Christianity, when they were made to believe it necessary for them also to observe the *Mosaical* Law if they would be Christians. And this is one of the common Scandals of the World, that Truth is so often insincerely represented, and false Doctrines propounded still by the same Authority that holds forth some necessary Truths. And for this reason the Gospel does not allow, but commands us to use a Judgment of Discretion; not to reject that which is good, because it comes from the same Authority that requires evil; nor to admit error, because it is accompanied with truth, but to *prove all things, and to hold fast that which is good.*

4. All Popular Artifices that are used to recommend either wicked Errors, or Pra-

Practices, are also great Offences, and lead many silly Souls astray, of which kind the most obvious are these. An external shew of Strictness and Piety, without Real Virtue and Godliness in the Heart of it. And of this the Pharisees were the first notable instance, who placing Religion in a multitude of minute Observations, seemed to be the most strict and devout People in the World, and therefore our Saviour knowing the wickedness of their Hearts and Lives, compared them to *whited Sepulchres, but within were full of dead mens bones, and all uncleanness*. And this Offence would be so powerful whenever it should happen, that it seemed good to the Spirit to foretel it expressly, 1 Tim. iv. That in the latter times some should depart from the Faith, giving heed to seducing Spirits, forbidding to Marry, and commanding to abstain from Meats, ver. 1, 2, 3. Another Offence of this kind, which was also expressly foretold, is, pretending the Testimony of Miracles. For says our Saviour himself, *There shall arise false Christs, and false Prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch, that if it were possible, they should deceive the very elect. Behold*, says he, *I have told*

you

you before, Matth. 24. 24, 25. And thus St. *Paul* foretold, that when that *wicked one should be revealed*, his *coming* should be *after the working of Satan with power and signs, and lying wonders, and with all deceivableness of unrighteousness*. I shall name but one other popular device for the supporting of Errour, and that is to denounce Damnation peremptorily against all Gainsayers; with which Artifice the Judaizers secured themselves against the Gentile Christians, saying, *Except ye be circumcised, and keep the law of Moses, ye cannot be saved*. Now although every man that has a tongue, may, if he please, lay this weight upon his Cause, as to exclude all from Salvation that are not of his way; and therefore the threatning be not worthy of a wise man's thought, till the merits of the Cause be examined: Yet it has two notable advantages, that it is framed to work upon the passions of men, more than upon their judgment, and in most men their passion is stronger than their reason; and it may be so used, as to bear the World in hand, that 'tis not Uncharitableness, but meer Pity and Tenderness to the Souls of Men, that compels them to speak so harsh, but so necessary

fatyr a Truth. And 'tis a wonderful thing to observe how easie Men are to be managed, when on the one side there is a positive Sentence of Damnation to work upon their fears, and on the other, an appearance of serious Charity to win their Affections: for by this Art, Men of contrary Parties, have with strange success served contrary Opinions and Practices. I cannot, if I were willing, reckon all the Offences of this kind, that is popular and plausible ways of deceiving. But that there would be such, our Saviour did not only foretel in the general, when he said, *It must needs be that Offences come*; but in particular also, when he said, *Beware of false Prophets, which come to you in sheeps-cloathing*, Mat. 7. 15.

6. To this I may add what St. *Paul* observes, 1 *Tim.* 6. 5. *Perverse disputings of men of corrupt minds, and destitute of the truth, supposing that gain is godliness.* That any thing may be defended as a part of Religion, which makes for worldly Interest. It is no such hard matter to perplex things that are plain, to find colours for denying things that are evident, to hide the weakness of the strength of an Argument, to divert from the Cause to the Person so artificially, as if the

Cause

Cauſe went on ſtill, to loſe the matter in debate, to make Truth look like Errour, and Errour like Truth, to thoſe that are willing to be deceived; if a man is reſolved to bend all his wit this way, for ſomething may be ſaid for any thing.

6. And laſtly, bad examples of men profeſſing the true Religion, are another moſt dangerous Offence: Since I doubt moſt men are ſo framed as to take up their opinions more eaſily from Authority than from other Argument, and they underſtand more eaſily the difference between good and evil Manners, than between ſtrong and weak Reaſons. And then they will be apt to judge of the Truth or Falſhood of a way of Religion by the good or bad Fruits of Practice it brings forth in thoſe that profeſs it: which doubtleſs our Saviour intimated in thoſe words; *Let your light ſo ſhine before men, that others ſeeing your good works, may glorify your Father which is in heaven.* But to hold the Truth in Unrighteouſneſs, is not only a Scandal to thoſe that are in Errour, confirming them in their wrong way, but likewiſe to thoſe that are in the way of Truth, by encouraging them to Sin in like manner; eſpecially when evil examples are

ſet by thoſe that are particularly obliged to ſet none but good ones, whoſe Place or Office, Wealth or Quality makes them more conſpicuous, and gives others any kind of dependence upon them. And becauſe of the pernicious influence of bad examples, we find St. *Paul* often calling upon the Chriſtians with whom he had to do, to fix their obſervation upon thoſe that were good: *Brethren*, ſays he, *be followers together of me, and mark them which walk ſo as ye have us for an enſample: For many walk of whom I have often told you, and now tell you, even weeping, that they are the enemies of the croſs of Chriſt.*

Thus I have very briefly, conſidering the largeneſs of the Subject, ſhewn what Offences were to come, by laying before you the principal and moſt obvious Offences, which we know by the Predictions of the Scripture, and alas for the World! by too ſad experience. And now I proceed to the ſecond Point, which was to conſider, why it muſt needs be that Offences ſhould come; that is, why it was not to be expected, but that theſe, or ſuch Scandals as theſe would be given to the World.

And

And this Inquiry is neceſſary to be purſued upon this account, if upon no other, that it may appear, that the certainty of Offences coming, did not ariſe from any defect or fault of the Bleſſed Goſpel of our Saviour. If we conſider the Harmleſs and Dovelike Temper of Chriſtianity, the excellency of its Deſign, the richneſs of its Promiſes, the Divinity of its Rules and Precepts, the Comforts it has in ſtore for all honeſt Minds, and that inſtead of running croſs to the Intereſts of Mankind, either here or hereafter, it ſhews an infallible way to ſingle Perſons, and to Communities to be happy in this World, and to all men to be for ever bleſſed in the World to come; We would rather have expected it ſhould have been foretold, that no man in any Age would ever ſet himſelf to *oppoſe* the deſign of the Goſpel, either in whole or in part. If likewiſe we obſerve what clear and undeniable Teſtimonies of Divine Revelation God approved and owned it by, how highly reaſonable the Principles thereof are, and how thoſe things which could not be known but by Revelation, yet being once revealed, do ſatisfie our Reaſon, and approve themſelves to it; How evident the Deſign thereof is,

how plain the Precepts, how few the poſitive Inſtitutions of it are, and how ſignificant and profitable they are, and how full of Inſtruction, finally, how manifeſt thoſe neceſſary Doctrines are, the belief whereof is neceſſary to make a man a Chriſtian; and what that *Myſtery of Godlineſs* is, which in the Apoſtles days was confeſſed, and *without Controverſie*: If we look upon theſe things, and no farther, we ſhould rather have expected that the Doctrine of our Saviour ſhould never have been gainſaid; never perverted, never mingled with Errour, never have given occaſion to wrangling and diſcord, and never have become the matter of nice and angry Diſpute, but onely of an unblamable Faith and Practice. The Goſpel of Chriſt is undoubtedly a *faithful Saying*, or Doctrine clearly revealed, and ſtanding upon evident Teſtimonies of Divine Revelation; it is alſo *worthy of all acceptation*: Why then *muſt it needs be that Offences come?* To which I ſhall give a plain anſwer in our Saviour's words to *Nicodemus*: *That light is come into the world, and men love darkneſs rather then light, becauſe their deeds are evil*, Joh. 3. 18. and therefore *it muſt needs be that Offences* ſhould

come.

come. For the Religion of Chriſt is not ſutable to the Spirit of this World, and therefore the World hateth it; and therefore no wonder if it hath one way or other always ſought to obſtruct the Progreſs and Deſign of it: In a word, it is not the defect, but the exceeding excellence and purity of true Chriſtianity, that has given occaſion to the World to oppoſe it, to pervert it, and to diſcourage the Profeſſion or Practice of it. For it is a Religion too wiſe and too good for them that have no mind to be wiſe and good themſelves; and therefore conſidering the great corruption of humane Nature, which God would not over-bear by an irreſiſtible power, but cure by rational means and methods; no wonder that Offences have come, nay, that our Saviour ſaid *it muſt needs be that Offences come.* To argue more particularly:

1. The Doctrine of the Goſpel is a Doctrine of Manners, lays a ſevere reſtraint upon all the unreaſonable Luſts of Men, and makes a great many Liberties unlawful, which they are for the moſt part violently inclined to take: And therefore every carnal man while he ſo continues, carries within himſelf a ter-

rible prejudice, a ſecret Enemy againſt the Truth as it is in Jeſus; and his Heart riſeth with as much anger againſt that Doctrine of God, that telleth him it is not lawful for him to purſue his worldly and fleſhly deſires as he would, but to ſubdue and mortifie them; as *Herod*, when he took his Brother's Wife, expreſſed againſt *John* the *Baptiſt*, for ſaying, *It is not lawful for thee to have her*. Man's Nature affecteth a lawleſs Liberty, and cannot endure to be confined; it is diſeaſed, and cannot endure to be healed; and it was therefore likely enough that very many would reject the Phyſician, and be angry with thoſe very Remedies that our Heavenly Father has ſent. The true and ſincere Doctrine of Chriſt, my Brethren, if it be believed, cannot but make us very uneaſie and unquiet while we are conſcious of ſin, and are not willing to be reformed, becauſe it reveals to us the Wrath of God againſt all our unrighteouſneſs and ungodlineſs; it forewarns us of a dreadful Sentence at the laſt day, and of an everlaſting Punihhment, which we are unwilling at the ſame time to venture, in which we are unwilling to part with our ſins, and to reconcile our ſelves to God by Repentance. And Men that

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are lovers of Pleaſures, and lovers of Gain, cannot eaſily admit a Doctrine which gives them as much uneaſineſs and diſturbance as if the point of a Sword were always turned toward their very Hearts. For this Reaſon the *Phariſees* could not endure the Doctrine of Jeſus; and this was one Reaſon why the Heathens oppoſed it, and perſecuted it, and is one Reaſon why Chriſtians have corrupted it; by finding out other ways to avoid Damnation, than by a lively Faith, and true Repentance, and effectual Reformation, and keeping the Commandments of God. It is this that hath made way for ſatisfactory Commutations, Merits of others, and the abſolute power of the Keys; and all thoſe devices which are good for nothing but to reconcile a wicked Life to the hopes of Heaven, and to entangle the plain ſenſe of thoſe words of Chriſt; *He that heareth theſe ſayings, and doth them not, I will liken him to a fooliſh man that built his Houſe upon the Sand, and the winds blew, and the rain fell, and the floods came and beat upon that Houſe, and it fell, and great was the fall thereof*; that is, it ſuffered an irreparable Ruin.

2. If we conſider the Doctrine of Chriſt, as it is a Doctrine both of Faith and Manners, it is no way framed to ſerve the ends of ambitious and worldly-minded men, or to help them in purſuing thoſe ends by a pretence of Religion; and therefore it was not to be expected but in proceſs of time it would be by ſome or others molded for that purpoſe, when Opportunity ſhould ſerve. Our Saviour taught the World no other Principles of Morality, no other Articles of Faith, than what were equally for the Intereſt of all parts of Mankind to believe and follow; a common good, and an equal benefit was intended in them all. For let them prevail without corruption and alteration, the Honour and Safety of Soveraign Princes is ſecured, and a quiet and peaceable Life to Subjects; Neighbour-Nations ſhall give ſtrength and confidence, inſtead of creating Jealouſies to one another; the Maſter ſhall be better ſerved, and the Servant better uſed; the Church by her Doctrine and Spiritual Authority will be a Guard to the State, and receive at the ſame time Protection from it. Here was no deſign in Chriſtianity to ſet up any Nation or party of Men, in oppoſition and to the diſadvantage

tage of all mankind beſide; but it plainly aimed at a general good, and under its Penalties requires all its Profeſſors to aim at the ſame too; and condemns thoſe who are lovers of themſelves in oppoſition to all others, amongſt the greateſt Offenders. And this Religion, as *Machiavel* well obſerved, was not calculated for the inſpiring of Men with great Deſigns, ſuch I ſuppoſe as his *Cæſar Borgia* aimed at. It was too plain, too Philoſophical, too Innocent and Charitable, to raiſe an ambitious heat, or to ſerve it. And therefore it was very likely in proceſs of time, that it ſhould be helped out by other Principles and Doctrines that would bring in the *ſwelling of worldly Pride* into the Church, as the *African* Fathers, in their Epiſtle to *Celeſtine*, called it, and advance one part of it to the depreſſing of all the reſt. But becauſe true Chriſtianity ſerves no ſuch Deſign, therefore was our Saviour oppoſed by the Rulers of the Jews; his Doctrine did not tend at all that way, *viz.* to make *Hieruſalem* the Miſtreſs of the World, and that all ſhould depend upon her; it did not miniſter to their ambitious and worldly Hopes, and therefore was not for their turn.

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3. If we look upon Christianity as a Rule of Worship, it will still hold true that Offences must needs come, because the Worship it prescribes is a Worship of great simplicity, that has but two or three positive Institutions of Divine Authority, *viz.* the two Sacraments, and the Invocation of God through the Name and Mediation of his Holy Son Jesus. Now this was not likely to be acceptable to the generality of Mankind, who love rather a pompous number of Ceremonies, and nice Observations, than a grave and decent administration of Worship. For the former does amuze the Senses, and entertain the Imagination, the latter does that but very little in Comparison, and rather satisfies our Reason. But most People are more apt to be affected with things that touch their Fancy than their Judgment. And therefore it was hardly to be expected but in time their would grow very great excesses in this kind, as there did even in St. *Austin*'s days, who complain'd of it not a little in his Epistle to *Januarius*. Neither could it be doubted but such excesses would be accompanied with false Notions of Religion, and of the way to please God: For whereas the excellent design of our Saviour in appoint-

pointing so small a number of external Observations, leaving the necessary Rules of Decency to be determined by the Church, was this, to take Men off from all pretence of placing the weight of Religion in outward Ceremonies, and by their very Worship to instruct them in Piety and Vertue; and to shew them that God will not be pleased without those things; whereas he did hereby effectually declare, that God, who is a Spirit, would be worshipped in Spirit and in Truth; that is, with the Affections of a pious Heart, and the Obedience that is expressed in a good Life. The corrupt Nature of Man is as averse from this, as 'tis fond of the other; and desires to please God by so easie a Religion as that which runs out into a world of Mysteries, and Shews, and Observations; and seems to save them the labour of subduing their Lusts and Passions, and of serving God by a righteous and holy Life. And this was one thing that made the Primitive Christians contemptible and odious to the Heathens, that they had so few Rites and Ceremonies, so plain and simple a Form of Divine Service; but one Altar, but one Mediator, no Tutelar Deities and Patrons, no throngs of petty Gods; but one or

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two Myſteries, and thoſe too plain and inſtructing, without Pomp and Amuzement; for ſuch cauſes as theſe, they reckoned the Chriſtians little better than Atheiſts, believing that a Religion which made no ſtately ſhew, to be as good as none at all. 'Tis true, that God himſelf appointed a Form of Divine Service to the *Iſraelites*, that conſiſted of a vaſt number of Ceremonies; but beſides this, that they were to be the Types to diſcover the *Meſſias* when he ſhould appear: There was another end of Divine Providence obſervable in that Conſtitution, which was this; that they having a ſtately and Myſtical Form of Worſhip of their own, might be leſs under a Temptation of learning of the Idolatrous Nations round about them; whoſe numerous and gaudy Ceremonies in their Worſhip, would have bewitched the Jews ten times more than they did, if they had not been able to vye with them. But God by his Prophet ſaid, That he gave them Statutes that were not good, to be ſure not the beſt, in themſelves, but conſidering the time, the beſt for them. For when God ſent his Son into the World, who was to teach all mankind to Worſhip the Father in Spirit and in Truth, and to convert the

the Nations from Idolatry, the Scheme of the *Moſaic* Worſhip was taken down, and the Church was furniſhed with nothing but Prayers and Praiſes, two Sacraments, and one Mediator. But by all this it appears, that the deſign of the Goſpel in this matter runs counter to the fond and fooliſh inclinations of mankind; and therefore that Offences were ready to come upon this account alſo.

So that conſidering the temper and deſign of the Goſpel, it was a Religion too good for a wicked World, too wiſe for a vain and fooliſh World; I mean, it was too good and too wiſe, to eſcape Oppoſition, and all change; the World would either try to keep it out, or when that was in vain to attempt any longer, to ſquare and form it better to its own purpoſes and inclinations. It was upon this account, *viz.* of the deſign of the Goſpel which was exalted above a worldly Spirit, that a peculiar temper was required by our Saviour, in order to the embracing of his Doctrine. A Spirit of Honeſty and Sincerity, of Humility and Teachableneſs; love of the Truth, willingneſs to learn, patience of Reproof, and the like; without which Diſpoſitions, the common prejudices againſt Chriſtianity

nity would certainly hinder the efficacy of thoſe Arguments and Motives, by which it was recommended. And therefore ſince God did not intend by an irreſiſtible act upon the minds of Men to over-rule them into a compliance with the Goſpel, it was not to be expected but that it ſhould be firſt of all greatly oppoſed, as it was; and afterwards inſincerely handled, as it hath been: And this, although the Doctrine of the Goſpel is peculiarly furniſhed with means to infuſe a wiſe and honeſt diſpoſition into them that want it. For thoſe means are conſiſtent with the liberty of Humane Nature, and after all, men may be the worſe and not the better for them. Nothing could in its own Nature be more fit to awaken Men to Conſideration, and to lead them to Honeſty and Wiſdom, and to conquer all worldly and carnal prejudices than the promiſe of Eternal Life, and the warning of a day of Judgment to come. It is in this that the great power of the Goſpel to mend the tempers of Men conſiſts: But when all is done in this kind that can be done, Men may chooſe their Portion in this World, becauſe they will not hearken and conſider. And it well became Di-

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vine Providence to permit thoſe to reſiſt the Holy Spirit, and the means of Salvation, who would not be reclaimed by any reaſonable means; and that for theſe three Reaſons.

1. That there might be a clear difference made between the good and honeſt heart on the one ſide, and the inſincere and incourigible on the other: Which had been impoſſible, if God had by his Omnipotence equally overborn all men into the Faith and Obedience of Chriſt. But as the caſe ſtands, the Goſpel is a Touch-ſtone that diſtinguiſheth between the Humble and Sincere, and the Unteachable and Diſhoneſt part of Mankind. And the Offences which are given by thoſe that do not receive the Truth in the love of it, are a farther trial of the ſincerity and ingenuity of men, as St. *Paul* ſaid of one kind of Offences: *There muſt be Hereſies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifeſt.* And therefore notwithſtanding Offences, that remains true which our Saviour ſaid, *All that the Father giveth me ſhall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wiſe caſt out*, Joh. 6. 37. *i. e.* All ſincere and humble perſons, who are commit-

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ted to the ſpecial care of Chriſt, to train them up to eternal Life, will be ſufficiently armed againſt Temptations, and the Offences that are laid in their way, ſhall but clear their ſincerity and wiſdom more to the World, and turn to the encreaſe of their reward.

2. As the ſincerity of the Righteous, ſo neither had the proper advantages and power of Truth been ſeen had God interpoſed his irreſiſtible power to prevent all Offences and Endeavours againſt the Truth: And therefore he was pleaſed to ſuffer Errour and Folly to appear upon the ſtage of the World, even after the heavenly Wiſdom of the Goſpel was made known to Mankind, that by its own ſtrength it might ſtruggle with all kind of oppoſition, and prevail, and be juſtified of her Children.

3. By this way the Wiſdom of Divine Providence, and the truth of God's word, and his care over the Church is ſeen more illuſtriouſly, than if Offences had never been ſuffered. That Promiſe that the Gates of Hell ſhould never prevail againſt the Church of Chriſt, nor the Faith loſt from the Earth, had lain in the Goſpel unobſerved; we ſhould

ſhould have had no occaſion for recourſe to it, no means of tryal whether we put our truſt in it; had the Truth been never oppoſed, never corrupted, we had wanted one notable reaſon to praiſe God, that while the Offences are ſo riſe in this World, this Church gives no Offence in matter of Doctrine, or in matter of Worſhip; and that God may count us worthy to enjoy ſo ineſtimable a Bleſſing, let us pray that we may give no Offence by our Examples; let us adorn our Profeſſion by our Converſations; and ſhew the Purity of our Faith, by the Purity of our Actions. Thus much for the neceſſity of Offences that thus would ariſe. *It muſt needs be that Offences come.*

The Third Sermon.

MATTH. XVIII. 7.

Wo unto the World becauſe of Offences; for it muſt needs be that Offences come; But wo to that man by whom the Offence cometh.

I Come now to the ſecond point, *viz.* That Offences would do great miſchief in the World. *Wo unto the World becauſe of Offences.* In ſpeaking to which I ſhall conſider,

I. What miſchief is done by Offences?

II. Whence it comes that they are of ſo pernicious a Conſequence?

1. What miſchief is done by them? And in this Queſtion I need not be large, becauſe the Anſwer to it has in ſome part been already given under thoſe ſeveral heads of Scandal which I mentioned before; it being impoſſible to

ſhew where the Scandal of any Practice or Opinion lies, without touching upon the miſchief it is apt to do. But to what has been ſaid, ſomething may be added.

1. The general miſchief of Offences or Scandals, is this; That they are a prevailing Temptation upon many in the World to forſake the way of Truth and Piety. For as good Examples and Encouragements, good Counſels and Inſtructions are proper means of making others better; ſo ill Examples, and the Arts of Seducing muſt needs have a contrary influence. God has put us into a kind of dependance upon one another, and has thereby given us Opportunities of the greateſt Charity, and the beſt kinds of doing good, *viz.* of leading and confirming one another in the way of Truth and Vertue. But there is no help for it; but the Society we have with one another may be abuſed into a means of doing one another miſchief. And therefore as where Truth is ſincerely repreſented, where Vertue is encouraged, where Authority protects them, where Wit and Learning are engaged to recommend them, there abundance of good will be done upon thoſe who are framed

framed to learn, and not to teach; to follow, but not to lead the way: So on the other hand, it is not to be expected, but the abuſe of all thoſe Advantages will create Prejudices againſt Truth and Goodneſs, and miſlead multitudes. And this is too evident from the Experience of the World in all Ages. No Opinions, how fooliſh and abſurd ſoever, how pernicious ſoever to the common Intereſt of Mankind, if they have been ſet off with plauſible Colours, or ſupported by Authority, or have been accommodated to the Intereſts of wicked Men; but they have had Abettors and Followers, and have very often taken ſuch deep Root in the Affections of Men, that 'tis one of the hardeſt things in the World to convert them into the way of Truth. But more particularly in the ſecond place.

2. The ſcandal of advancing Doctrines that give liberty to the Luſts of Men, and eaſe to their Minds without effectual Reformation. This Scandal, I ſay, has this pernicious effect, that for the moſt part it ſears the Conſciences of Men, and hardens their Hearts againſt all Reproof. Although it be a terrible aggravation of Sin, for a Man to venture upon the doing

of that which his Conſcience pulls him back from, and for which he knows he muſt give a ſad account at the laſt day, if it be not prevented by Sorrow and Reformation; yet ſuch a Man is in a better condition than one that is well ſatisfied with himſelf, and believes his condition to be good enough, while he goes on in his ſins without Reformation, becauſe he has another way to eſcape the damnation of Hell. For ſo long as a Man believes the Promiſes and Threatnings of the Goſpel as they are, and knows the Terms upon which they are made, it may be hoped that he will at length lay theſe things ſeriouſly to Heart; and that ſome awakening Reproof from Men, or ſome merciful Providence of God may make the Truth which he is already provided with the belief of, effectual to his Converſion. But there is little Reaſon to hope this of a Man whoſe very Principles are corrupted, and has no fears within himſelf for a charitable Man to take hold upon. And therefore that ſaying of our Saviour may be well applied to ſuch a Perſon: *If the light that is in him be darkneſs, how great is that darkneſs?* Moreover, there is little hope to reform that Man's evil Practiſes, whoſe perſuations make

make him ſecure and eaſie all the while. So there is no little difficulty to be met with, in trying to undeceive him; for Men will hold comfortable Errors as long as they can find the leaſt pretence for it. And which is not the leaſt miſchief of this Offence, though ſuch Errors are not laid down without a great trouble, yet they are taken up with much readineſs; they are apt to ſpread far and wide: And to this I believe the experience of the World agrees, *viz.* That although there are miſtakes that lead to trouble of Mind and over-much reſtraint, yet for one that is led away by ſuch miſtakes, an hundred there are that believe comfortable Lies, which either wholly take off the reſtraints of Religion, or in ſuch part, as to render them ineffectual.

3. Perverſe Diſputes, and an obſtinate Maintenance of Error by all the Arts of Sophiſtry, has this lamentable evil commonly attending it, that it renders many Perſons utterly careleſs to examine on which ſide the Truth lies. Perhaps they are but few in compariſon that are framed to an inquiſitive Spirit; and they who are not ſo framed by Nature, or by Education, muſt force their Tempers to Patience, and take pains with themſelves,

which is an Employment that Men ſoon grow weary of; and commonly they break off, pretending it is to no purpoſe to ſearch any farther; but that when there is ſo much to be ſaid on both ſides, when there is ſuch an appearance of Reaſon for and againſt the ſame thing, it is time for them to give over being Judges for themſelves. And indeed in things that are either really diſputable, or of leſs moment, this were not much to be blamed. But in matters of high Conſequence, and Queſtions that touch the very Vitals of Religion, it often happens that Men grow weary of ſearching Truth, and give up themſelves wholly to be led by the Authority and Judgment of others after the Controverſie is ſtifly maintain'd for ſome time on both ſides. And it were well in this caſe, if it were an even lay whether they chooſe the true Guide or not. But when a Guide is to be choſen, and followed with an implicite Faith, the falſe Guide hath this Advantage always, that he exceeds in Confidence, in lofty Pretences, in ſwelling Titles, in poſitive denouncing Damnation to all that are not of his way; and though a Modeſt Man that ſpeaks juſtly of things, and claims not to be Infallible, deſerves

deſerves the moſt Credit; yet 'tis great odds that the other has moſt followers amongſt thoſe that underſtand not the merits of the Cauſe.

4. The ſame Cauſe has too often a yet worſe Effect, and that is to run ſome Perſons into Infidelity, and an utter neglect of Religion, as if no certainty could be had of the Principles of Religion, ſeeing there is ſo much Controverſie about it. And ſome have ſaid, that it will be then time enough for them to believe in God, and to worſhip him, when they that pretend to oblige them to it are agreed about it. The truth is, were it not for that ſecret impreſſion of his own Being which God hath left upon our Nature, it is not improbable but the monſtrous Errors that have been obtruded upon a great part of Mankind under the name of Faith, and the force and the fraud wherewith they have been maintain'd, had let in Atheiſm like a Deluge upon the World; eſpecially conſidering that there are thoſe in the World, who are ſo full of Zeal for their own way, that they have no tenderneſs for the common Principles of Faith, but are rather content that all ſhould ſink together, than that their own Doctrines

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ſhould not ſtand. We have been born in hand that no aſſurance can be had of the truth of Chriſtianity, but from the Authority of ſuch and ſuch Men; and they that believe upon other Grounds had as good have no Faith at all. That if it were poſſible for them to propound any thing that is falſe, we cannot be certain of any one Article that is true. That the ſame exceptions may be made to the Miracles of Chriſt and his Apoſtles that are made againſt the ſtories of latter Miracles; and finally, that by the ſame Reaſon that any of their Traditions are rejected the Holy Scriptures may be rejected too; and indeed we have lived to ſee the utmoſt that can be done by Wit and Learning to diminiſh the Authority of the Bible. Now this, I ſay, is a moſt dreadful Offence, and has done infinite miſchief in the World, that Men who are violently engaged in a wrong way of Religion, care not for the moſt part what they venture in the ſervice of their own Cauſe; for whileſt they lay the ſame ſtreſs upon falſe, or at leaſt diſputable Points, that they do upon the moſt neceſſary and acknowledged Principles of Religion, and bend all their Wit to ſhew that no difference ought to

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be made, they give occaſion to Men that would fain be Atheiſts, to deceive themſelves into what they would be. For a very little conſideration will ſerve to ſatisfie them that ſomething is falſe which is propounded to them as an Object of their Faith. And they know that they have then leave given them to conclude that nothing is true.

5. There is another great miſchief of Offences that are given by Errors in Doctrine or Practice, and a miſchief that often happens in the World; which is that of running into a contrary extream. The Church found this by ſad Experience in the fourth and fifth Ages, when men of no ſmall note diſputing againſt one Hereſie, fell into another of an oppoſite Nature, to the no ſmall trouble of Chriſtendom. Truth ſometimes as well as Vertue lies in the mean; and they that tranſgreſs on any one ſide, do not only this miſchief to give what Authority they can to the wrong ſide they are of, but they do this miſchief too of giving occaſion to others to offend on the other extream. Thus the abuſe of Church-Authority on the one ſide, has bred in ſome men contempt of all ſuch Authority on the other. The ſcandals

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that have been given by propagating Opinions by Force and Violence, have produced in many a fond perſuaſion that there ought to be no reſtraints whatſoever in matters of Religion. Superiours have required unlawful things in Divine Service; and to be revenged upon that abuſe, it has been ſaid, that they are not to be obeyed in matters of Prudence and Expedience. Religion has been made to run out into Shews and Ceremonies, and this has begotten prejudices againſt all appearance of Beauty and Reverence in the external Worſhip of God. And on the other ſide, the exceſſes of men in departing from one extream, are ſcandalous to thoſe whom they left, and do confirm them in their Errors. Thus becauſe there are ſome who abuſe the Liberty this Church gives to all of uſing the Holy Scriptures, and who reject the aſſiſtance of their Guides; they that are concerned the People ſhould know as little of the Bible as is poſſible, argue from the Folly and Vanity of the former, how dangerous an Inſtrument it is in the hands of the Laity. And becauſe 'tis impoſſible but that a Judgment of Diſcretion in matters of Religion being allowed to all, muſt be liable

liable to be abuſed; they that abuſe it to the making of Sects and Parties, and the bringing in of Innovations, give a ſtandle to that Church to glory in her Diſſention, which provides that all ſhould believe as ſhe believes, becauſe of her Authority; and that no Man judges of the particulars of his Faith, for himſelf. The truth is, the inſtances of this miſchief are ſo many, and ſo undeniable, that when-ever any great Scandal is given by Communities or Churches, that conſiſts in one extream; a Man may, without the Spirit of Prophecy, foretel that if the great Mercy of God prevent it not, it will in time beget the other extream. It is the great unhappineſs of Mankind, that oppoſite Errors, which look as if one would deſtroy the other, do really ſtrive to ſupport one another. And yet there is hardly any fooliſh Advice more frequent, than to run from an extream as far as is poſſible, as if that were the way to make an end of it. But by this means woful miſchiefs have happened in the World; Diviſions have been multiplied, Uncharitableneſs increaſed, and Men more and more hardned in their ways of Error and Sin.

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6. The ſcandal of mixing abſurd and impious Doctrines with the Truth, and unjuſtifiable Practiſes with ſuch as are to be commended, has this notorious miſchief ſtill attending it, that it hinders the Converſion of Infidels, and is a terrible obſtruction to the propagating of Chriſtianity. *Averroes* did not ſpeak his own ſenſe alone, when he ſaid, *Since the Chriſtians eat their God, let my Soul be with the Philoſophers.* The Scandals that are given to *Jews* and *Turks* I need not name, but to make an end of this unpleaſing Argument.

7. and laſtly, The miſchief of theſe and all other Offences, is ſo much the greater, becauſe when once Offence is given, no man can tell where the miſchief will end. For inſtance, ſuppoſe by my Example I animate another to ſin in like manner; or that I do not only corrupt his Manners, but his Principles too, and ſo do him all the hurt I can. Who can ſay that this is all the miſchief I have done? Is it not likely that he will infect others, as I have infected him? and that they may go on to propagate the miſchief which had its beginning from me? And that the next Age may be the worſe for me? And that my Guilt

Guilt may be growing Ages after I am dead? Apply this to all the Offences that are given in the World, and conſider not only the greatneſs of the miſchief they do, but the ſpreading Nature of it, and we ſhall find great reaſon in thoſe ſad words of our Lord; *Wo to the world becauſe of Offences.* But, 2. Whence comes it that Offences are taken, and ſo all this miſchief done by them?

In general it might be ſufficient to anſwer, That for whatever Cauſes ſome men are apt to give Offence, for the ſame others are apt to take it; and therefore it would not be impertinent to call over in this place the unſuitableneſs of the Goſpel to the Luſts, and to the Vanity of Mankind, whether it be conſidered as a Rule of Faith, or Manners, or Worſhip. But to this it may be added,

1. That there are a great many in the World, who for want of either good natural Abilities, or good Education, have little ability to judge for themſelves; and therefore the moſt part take their Impreſſions from the Authority of other mens Examples, or Inſtructions. And therefore when they fall into ill hands, they fare accordingly; to which

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our Saviour ſeemed to have a particular regard in the Verſe before the Text; *Whoſoever ſhall offend one of theſe little ones, which believe in me, it were better for him that a milſtone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the ſea.* So that becauſe there would be ſome Perſons ſincerely diſpoſed, who in many things could not judge for themſelves, but muſt be led by Authority, our Saviour, for their greater ſecurity, provided this frightful Threatning, to deter all men from taking the advantage of their weakneſs to miſlead them.

2. Some ſtumble at Offences laid before them, and take up pernicious Doctrines, meerly from impatience of conſidering, and taking time to lay things together. He that judges raſhly and haſtily, may by chance make a true Judgment, but he ſhall as often judge falſely; it being no difficult thing, as I obſerved laſt time, to lay ſuch colours upon Error, as will require ſome leiſure to ſee through them. And in ſuch caſes if a Man be unwilling to take pains, and deſires to come preſently and eaſily to the Concluſion, he gives the Seducer all the Advantage he could deſire, and is indeed

indeed just the Person he desired to meet with; one easily deceived by a false appearance of Reason.

3. The strange influence which the carnal Affections of Men, and their worldly Interests have upon their Judgments, is a fatal cause of laying them open to the mischief of Scandals. We are too apt to desire Doctrines and Examples in favour of liberty to sin; and therefore when they are offered, we are not so apt as we should be to guard our selves against them. This it was among the Jews, as God said by *Jeremy*, *Jer.* 5. 31. *The Prophets prophesie falsly, and my people love to have it so.*

To these I might add other Causes, *viz.* The prejudice of Education, undue admiration of mens Persons, prejudice against Truth, arising from prejudice against Persons, an inclination to Opinions suitable to our own Temper and Complexion; love of Novelty on the one side, and on the other hatred to change, though it be for the better; all which Dispositions and Circumstances expose those that are under them to the mischief of Offences. But I should be over-tedious to run into all the particulars under this Head, which may also be

more profitably ſupplied by Directions in the cloſe of all.

And ſo I come to the third intention, which was to reduce what has been ſaid to matter of Exhortation. And I ſhall leave with you theſe two neceſſary Cautions.

I. Be careful to give no Offence.

II. Be careful to take none.

I. Be careful to give no Offence; *i. e.* to lay no ſtumbling-block in any Man's way to lead him into Sin or Error, or to confirm him in it. Remember the words of our Lord Jeſus, *Wo be to that man by whom the Offence cometh.* Now, the way to keep our ſelves free from this guilt, is to love the Truth our ſelves, ſincerely to deſire it, diligently to purſue it; and likewiſe in all our Actions to live by Rule, and then we ſhall be ſure to avoid giving ill Examples. And we are the more obliged to this, becauſe we are not only to give an account of our ſelves to God, but of our ſelves alſo with reference to the good or ill that others have received by us. Let us conſider, my Brethren, how careful we ſhould be of our own Actions, and thoſe eſpecially that lye

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open to others; when if we do ill our ſelves, we ſhall not only be to anſwer for our own tranſgreſſion of God's Law, but very likely for the ſins of others, who are either led into ſome unlawful Practice, or confirmed in it by our Examples. Which makes ſuch an increaſe of Guilt, and is ſo great a ſin in it ſelf, that it is ſometimes needful for a Man to abate of the uſe of his own Liberty in things not unlawful of themſelves, leſt another that is likely enough to make a wrong conſtruction of it, and to encourage himſelf in manifeſt ſin, ſhould indeed do ſo. And for this reaſon St. *Paul*, handling the Queſtion of eating things offered to Idols, acknowledgeth, That *meat commendeth us not unto God; for neither if we eat are we the better, neither if we eat not are we the worſe. But*, ſays he, *take heed leſt by any means this Liberty of yours become a ſtumbling-block to them that are weak*, who are not throughly confirmed in the worſhip of one God according to the Goſpel. *For*, as he goes on, *if any man ſee thee which haſt knowledge ſit at meat in the Idols Temple, ſhall not the Conſcience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat thoſe things which are offered to Idols?* i. e. be em-

boldened to commit Idolatry, 1 *Cor.* 8. So that although it was not in it ſelf unlawful to be preſent at thoſe Sacrifices, yet the Example being ſcandalous, St. *Paul* concludes it to be *a ſin againſt the Brethren*, and *againſt Chriſt*, *ver.* 12. And this in as much as it would *grieve their weak Conſcience*; *i. e.* not (as we uſe, I doubt, to underſtand that word *grieve*) that it would trouble and diſpleaſe them, but really hurt them, by making them bold to partake of the Idolatrous Sacrifice. And now, Brethren, if in things that are perhaps in their own Nature lawful, we ought to uſe caution, leſt by an unchariſable uſe of our Liberty we encourage others to do things that are in themſelves abſolutely unlawful: How much more cautious ſhould we be not to give any Authority to ſin, by an Example that is evil in it ſelf? So likewiſe we ought with the more care to chuſe our perſuaſions in Religion, becauſe in all likelihood we do not chuſe them for our ſelves only, but for our Children, for our Servants, for ſome of our Neighbours, for many that ſome way or other depend upon us, and for whom we muſt anſwer at the day of Judgment. And ſince we cannot profeſs, we can-

cannot live, but the World obſerves us; ſo how inſtructing ought to be our Profeſſion, how inſtructing our Converſation? How apt to promote Innocence, Truth, Vertue, and Piety? And this the more, the more we are in the Eye of others? In ſhort, no words I can uſe, can make ſuch an impreſſion upon you, as theſe words of our Saviour ought to make. *Wo be to him by whom the Offence cometh.* But this is not all.

2. We muſt alſo be careful not to take Offences, not to be led into Sin and Error by Example or Allurements, by any kind of Temptations whatſoever: To juſtifie which Exhortation, I deſire you to obſerve theſe three things.

1. That our bleſſed Lord hath foretold that Offences would come; nay, that *it muſt needs be that they come*; Nay, I have ſhewn, that the moſt dangerous Offences are particularly foretold in the New Teſtament. Now, Brethren, this very warning, in general, much more thoſe particular warnings, were deſigned to take away, in ſome good meaſure, the danger of thoſe ſcandals, by Arming us with caution againſt them before-hand. Since that is to be applied to all other particular Scandals, that is

expreſly added to the Prediction of *lying Wonders*, *Behold, I have told you before.* Now, if the Offences, though very dangerous of themſelves, were leſſened by being fore-told, our guilt in falling by ſuch Offences muſt be ſo much the greater, becauſe being fore-warn'd we would yet take no warning. The offenſiveneſs of theſe Offences is in ſome part abated by the cautions of the Scripture, in as much as we have no cauſe to be ſtartled and amazed, and to queſtion the care of God's Providence over his Church, becauſe Offences come, ſince the Author of our Faith has told us before-hand, that they muſt needs come. And,

2. We are alſo fore-warned of the guilt and miſery of falling by Offences; in as much as our Saviour hath ſaid, *Wo to the World becauſe of Offences*; *i. e.* as I told you at firſt, becauſe of that evil which will happen by taking Offence. But if Men were free from guilt in the committing of thoſe ſins which they fall into by reaſon of Scandals that are laid in their way. In ſhort, if taking Offence were not it ſelf a ſin, and in many caſes a very great ſin, and ſuch a ſin as we ſhall be ſadly account-

accountable for at the day of Judgment, there could be no Reaſon given, why our Saviour ſhould denounce a Wo upon this account; *Wo unto the world becauſe of Offences.*

3. Let us not forget what was obſerved laſt time, that God permits Offences to come; which, according to the common courſe of things, were in themſelves moſt likely to come; he permits them, I ſay, for the Tryal of our Ingenuity, our Honeſty and Sincerity. *There muſt be Hereſies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifeſt.* It is by no means unavoidable to ſtumble at Scandals, becauſe we are fore-warned of them; but if we take warning, it is for the Praiſe and Reward of our diligence and faithfulneſs in keeping to God's Word. Our Saviour ſpeaking of the Signs and Wonders done by falſe Chriſts, and falſe Prophets, ſays, *That if it were poſſible they ſhould deceive the very Elect*; that is, they would deceive the very beſt Men, but that they are guarded by Sincerity, and by the Grace of God; and theſe words plainly intimate, that this would be the Touch-ſtone to diſtinguiſh Perſons truly and ſolidly good, from all others, that

notwithſtanding the fair colours that would be put upon wicked Practices and Errors, they would perſevere in the ways of Truth and Godlineſs.

And now that we may not be miſled by Offences, but keep our ſelves unſpotted from this preſent World, and eſcape the Corruptions that are in the World through Luſt, let us take theſe few following Rules along with us.

1, Let that which is on all ſides acknowledged to be the Word of God, be of more power and force with us than all Humane Authorities whatſoever; which Rule, as it is moſt reaſonable, ſo it is a ſafe Rule upon this account, that if it be followed, it will ſecure us from the greateſt Offences, as thoſe Opinions and Practices are, which are evidently contrary to God's Word.

2. Let us keep cloſe to the Ancient Creeds, which our Church faithfully delivers; for no Man has yet been ſo bold as to offer the leaſt doubt againſt that; nay, all that we are challenged for, is, that we do not receive thoſe additions to the Creed, which in compariſon were but of Yeſterday. Theſe Ancient Forms of confeſſing the Faith, ſhew what Articles of meer Belief were thought by the

the Primitive Church neceſſary to be known and held by all: And becauſe the Faith was at once delivered to the Saints, no more can be neceſſary now than was then. Now, if we obſerve that the Profeſſion of this Faith is ſufficient to make a Chriſtian, or a Member of the Church; we ſhall be the better guarded againſt all erroneous Doctrines which are propounded to us by any Party, under the Notion of Neceſſary Truths. For whilſt we are ſure we profeſs all that was thought neceſſary at firſt, we ſhall be at eaſe, and feel no diſturbance in examining what is moreover propounded, and determining to receive it, if it has Authority from the Scriptures, and to reject it, if it has none; much more if it be contrary thereunto. Which Rule, I hope, you perceive is to take place in judging what you are to believe, not in judging whatſoever is to be done; for even in the Worſhip of God there are ſeveral things of an indifferent Nature, for which there is no particular Precept in the Scripture, and in which we may be, and ought to be concluded by the Cuſtom of our Church, and the Will of our Superiours. And he cannot miſcarry greatly, but is in great meaſure ſecured

cured from the miſchief of Offences, who in matters of Faith will be determined by nothing leſs than Divine Authority; and who in matters of external Order, which are no way determined by the Authority of the Scriptures, is ſtill ready to be concluded by the Authority of Man. But then,

3. Let us keep our ſelves always in the proper diſpoſition and preparation to judge and conclude aright for our ſelves (*i. e.*) by Sincerity, which conſiſts chiefly in a vehement deſire to underſtand the Truth, and to do our Duty: We muſt lay our Hands upon this, that we will be honeſt and good, and then we ſhall uſe all good Rules well; to be ſure we ſhall not be a whit the more inclined to embrace Doctrines for our Belief or Practice, becauſe they make for our worldly and carnal Intereſts. And this goes a great way to enable men to diſtinguiſh between Truth and Error, Good and Evil. Offences from without would not ſtumble us, if we were not weakned and blinded by the Offence of a vitious diſpoſition within our ſelves. And therefore our Saviour having given warning againſt the former in the words of the Text, doth

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in the very next words proceed to direct us how to ſecure our ſelves againſt them, and that by preventing the latter; *Wherefore* (ſays he) *if thy right hand or foot offend thee, cut them off: And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and caſt it from thee.* That is, ſubdue thy deareſt Luſts, and if there be any one that is harder to part with than the reſt, and is grown a part of thy ſelf, though it coſt thee as much pain to divide thy ſelf from it, as it would to *cut off thine hand*, or *pull out thine eye*, for that very reaſon do thou mortifie it in the firſt place: For when the World will be full of Offences, (*i. e.*) encouragements to Sin, and of deceitful Errors, if thou alſo art an Offence to thy ſelf, for want of a ſincere and *honeſt heart*, and purifying thy mind from worldly and carnal Luſts, thou wilt not be able to withſtand the Arts and Force of outward Temptations. Now the way to gain this Honeſt Mind, is to fix our thoughts ſteadfaſtly upon the Life to come, which is the means our Saviour directs to the uſe of in this place too: *And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, for it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than to be caſt into Hell-fire.* Laſtly,

Laſtly, Let all our other care be begun, continued, and ended in earneſt Prayer to God, that he would *enlighten the eyes of our minds*, and purifie our intentions, and lead us in the right way, and keep us in it by his Grace; For *the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous man availeth much* for another, but much more for himſelf, and moſt of all, when he asketh the beſt things, when he asketh thoſe things that pleaſe God beſt; a Mind purified from worldly Luſts, and an Underſtanding enlightned with the knowledge of the Truth: *He that doth theſe things, ſhall never fall.*

The

The Fourth Sermon.

MATTH. XXVI. 41.

Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: The ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak.

IN theſe words are contained an Exhortation to *watch and pray, that we enter not into temptation*, and a Reaſon upon which the Exhortation is made, *The ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak.*

In the Exhortation we may obſerve a Direction to the uſe of means, *watch and pray*; and then the end, why we ſhould do ſo, *That we enter not into temptation.*

As to the means, *watching* and *praying*, the uſe of them both ſuppoſes a great concern for the event: For if I am not only to be careful my ſelf, but to get all the help I can; nay, if I am

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to go to the God of Heaven and Earth for his help, and to ſeek it conſtantly, to be ſure as the end I aim at ought not to be in it ſelf trivial, ſo neither ought I to be trivially affected with it: A great concern for the end is ſuppoſed in the uſe of ſuch means, as Watchfulneſs and Prayer. But more particularly, as to *watching*; That ſignifies ſuch a care of our ſelves as ſuppoſes danger, and that was the caſe of the Diſciples, to whom the Exhortation was immediately given: Our Saviour was now preparing them for his approaching Paſſion, he would therefore have them conſider before-hand what a terrible Temptation it would be, to ſee their own Maſter forſaken, and contemned, and almoſt every body aſhamed, or afraid to own him; he would have them reflect upon their own Infirmities, and examine their own Hearts; and to conſider whether they were likely to hold out againſt ſuch a Temptation as was coming upon them. He would have them furniſh their minds with all the Powers of Faith, with all the Reaſons of Conſtancy, which they might infer from the Holy Doctrine he had taught them; they were now to conſider the value of their Souls, the

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vanity of the World, the promiſe of Everlaſting Life, and what-ever they had learnt from Jeſus, which was proper to confirm them in that good mind they were in at preſent; he would have them to reſolve well, and to fix their Reſolution not upon a ſudden heat only, not meerly upon the general diſpoſition of an Honeſt Mind, but upon a deliberate Judgment, what they muſt loſe, and what they ſhould get by doing as became them. Finally, he would have them to maintain a conſtant ſenſe of theſe things upon their minds, that they might not be at a loſs, and be found unprovided on the ſudden. All this is implied in *watching*, a Work which the Diſciples were bidden more ſtrictly to attend, becauſe the Lord had told them, that the hour was at hand, when a terrible Tryal would befall them, and therefore upon their neglect to do accordingly, he juſtly upbraided them afterward, *What, could ye not watch with me one hour?* And all this was to be drawn into conſequence, for the Inſtruction of all his Diſciples to the end of the World, not only upon extraordinary Occaſions, but in the ordinary courſe of their Lives; that is, that we ſhould be poſſeſſed with

a sense of God and our Duty, of the danger we are in by the Temptations of the World, the Flesh, and the Devil; of the fearful consequence of yielding to these Temptations; and that we should maintain a lively sense of these things upon our Minds, by being conversant in the Word of God, and by making the main Principles of Religion present to our Minds by a frequent consideration of them. This, I say, is incumbent upon us all, since our Saviour thought it needful for all, for, says he, *What I say unto you, I say to all, Watch*, Mark 13. 37.

But to Watchfulness our Lord Commands us to add Prayer, *Watch and Pray*.

And Prayer implies these two things.

1. A just sense of our own insufficiency, that if God be absent from us, our Purposes are uncertain, our Resolutions wavering and inconstant, and our Wills and Affections alterable by every blast of Temptation, though we may be provided with very good Reasons of Constancy in doing well. God hath not left us meerly to depend upon the strength of Arguments and Motives, though they are necessary, but hath promised more-

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over, the ſupernatural help of his Grace; and we are not to depend meerly upon the former, but knowing that we need farther aſſiſtance, we ſhould daily apply our ſelves to him by Prayer for it.

2. It implies not only a conſciouſneſs of our inability to do the thing that God requires, but moreover a ſteady belief of, and truſt in the grace of God which he hath promiſed, that it is *ſufficient* for us, and that he *will give the holy Spirit to them that ask him*; that he who is good to all, will be ready to help them eſpecially *that call upon him in ſincerity, and will not ſuffer them to be tempted above what they are able.* Such is the meaning of that part of the Exhortation, which concerns the means, *Watch* and *Pray*. Now,

2. The end of Watchfulneſs and Prayer is, *that we may not enter into Temptation.* The meaning of which Phraſe is plainly this, that we may not fall by Temptation; not, as the words at firſt hearing ſeem to import, that no Temptation may befall us; for as to that Temptation, which required the Vigilance and Devotion of our Lord's Diſciples at this time, he plainly told them, it would happen, and therefore by *entring into temptation*,

muſt be meant falling into that ſin, to which the Temptation is an inducement; and ſo the Exhortation runs, as if our Saviour had ſaid, You are very confident, that you ſhall do as you ought, as if it were one of the eaſieſt things in the World; but I tell you before-hand, that this Confidence of yours is a dangerous Preſumption, and you will find your ſelves deceived, when it comes to the Tryal, if you take no more care than you are now diſpoſed to take. I Adviſe you therefore to conſider what will happen, better than you have done, and to call together all thoſe Inſtructions you have heard from me, and make them preſent to your minds, and be ſo affected with them, as to betake your ſelves to Prayer, that being thus armed, not with an haſty, but a prudent Reſolution, and with dependence upon God, you may overcome the Temptation when it happens. This ſeems to be the Natural meaning of the Exhortation, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation.*

I proceed next to explain the Reaſon which our Saviour adds to enforce the Exhortation: *The ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak.* And now I doubt, when we hear or read theſe words, we are too

too apt to interpret them, as if Jesus had meant to excuse the sluggishness of his Disciples, and had indeed spoken to them in this manner. "It were well if you "would Watch and Pray, that you may "not fall by Temptation; but the truth "is, though you are willing so to do, "yet you are not very much to be bla-"med, but in some part to be excused, "if you do not, and that because of the "frailty and weakness of Humane Na-"ture. But I beseech you not to be fond of this way of expounding these words, for it is by no means true, nor in the least worthy of our Saviour's Wisdom, nor agreeable to the scope of his Doctrine: Let us not think so meanly of our Lord, as if he gave his Disciples necessary Directions, and in the same breath excused them, whether they fulfilled his Directions or not. These words, I say, do not contain an excuse of their neglect to watch and pray, but a Reason why they should do both, and such a Reason too as left them without all Excuse, if they failed in either: For thus they may be supposed to run. "Watch "and Pray, that ye enter not into Tem-"ptation, for though the Spirit is wil-"ling, yet the Flesh is weak, and so it is

"abſolutely neceſſary that ye Watch and "Pray. Which Interpretation, as it holds forth a worthy and excellent meaning of it ſelf, ſo it is clearly warranted by the circumſtances and ſcope of the place, and by the condition of thoſe Perſons at preſent, to whom theſe words were uſed, and by what befel them afterwards. And this will be very evident, if we examine the meaning of the words by theſe Rules: For then you will ſee,

1. That by a *willing ſpirit*, we are not to underſtand a forwardneſs to Watch and Pray, but a preſent Reſolution to overcome Temptations, and that a ſincere Reſolution too; ſuch a Reſolution as is accompanied with a ſtrong perſuaſion, that we *ſhall* do ſo; and that was the caſe of the Diſciples: For if we look back in this Chapter, we ſhall find, that upon their Maſter's fore-warning them what occaſion of Offence they would meet with that very Night, St. *Peter* briskly ſteps forward in the Name of all the reſt of the Apoſtles, all agreeing to what he ſaid, *v.* 33. *Though all men* (ſays he) *ſhall be offended becauſe of thee, yet will I never be offended.* Thus the *willingneſs* of the *Spirit* ſhewed it ſelf; that is, a forwardneſs to do all that became him

him in the hardeſt Circumſtances. But our Saviour, willing to prove him farther, anſwered, *v.* 34. *Verily I ſay unto thee, that this night before the Cock crow, thou ſhalt deny me thrice*; which was ſo far from taking down, that it rather raiſed his aſſurance, for he replyed, *v.* 35. *Though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee: Likewiſe alſo ſaid all the Diſciples.* There the *Spirit* ſhewed it ſelf *willing* again, and, which is to be obſerved, they were all at this time heartily diſpoſed to do as they ſaid; all, but the Traytor *Judas*; for which reaſon about this time, Jeſus acknowledged, that they were all ſincere and honeſt Perſons, excepting *Judas* only, *John* 13. 10, 11. *Ye are clean, but not all; For he knew who ſhould betray him, therefore ſaid he, Ye are not all clean. i. e.* Ye are not all honeſt Men, but ye are all ſo but one; all but one mean as you ſay, and intend to be as good as your word, and do believe that you ſhall. So that if we explain theſe words, *The Spirit indeed is willing*, by the condition of the Perſons to whom they were ſpoken, and by their preſent diſpoſition and perſuaſion, as we ought to do; the meaning is plainly this, as if our Saviour had ſaid, "I know ye are

"Men of ſincere and honeſt diſpoſitions, "and do intend very well, and ſay no "more than what you reſolve to make "good by performance, and I ſee that "you believe you ſhall be as good as "your word. Now therefore,

2. By *the weakneſs of the Fleſh* we are plainly led to underſtand thoſe Imperfections and Paſſions, which honeſt men are not wholly free from, and which will make Temptations dangerous even to the ſincereſt Perſons, eſpecially if they truſt to a preſent good diſpoſition of mind, and think that they are not in danger, becauſe they are now well reſolved. The Apoſtles, when our Lord told them before-hand of the Temptation that would happen, were conſcious to themſelves of their own ſincerity, and were ſo ſtrongly poſſeſſed with an aſſurance of it, that being men hitherto but of little Experience, they did not apprehend, or ſo much as feel their own weakneſs, becauſe the Temptation, which would make them feel it, was not preſent; but their Maſter was aware of thoſe Imperfections and Paſſions in them, which now indeed gave them no diſturbance, but within a little time would do ſo; that is, when the Temptation ſhould be preſent

ſent upon them: They did not conſider how the Paſſion of Fear would work, when it was once plain, that it would be the moſt dangerous thing in the World to own their Maſter; they were not ſufficiently ſenſible of the uncertainty of Humane Reſolutions, under ſtrong inducements to Inconſtancy, and how very poſſible it is even for ſincere men to be ſtaggered, nay, and to be overcome by Temptations, which they think themſelves ſufficiently guarded againſt by their Integrity. But our Saviour knew all this, and therefore told them of it beforehand, and uſed the conſideration of the *weakneſs of the Fleſh* as an Argument to perſwade them to *Watch* and to *Pray*, and not to truſt meerly to a willing mind, or a ſincere diſpoſition; he produces this Argument, I ſay, to make them abate of their confidence, and uſe more diligence, that they might be prepared by their own care, and by the grace of God to anſwer the occaſion that was at hand.

But to confirm this plain Interpretation, As *the willingneſs of the Spirit*, or the ſincerity of theſe men expreſſed it ſelf in their forward undertaking and promiſing to do as they ought, ſo *the*

weakneſs of the Fleſh diſcovered it ſelf in their failing to perform what they promiſed, whereby they made good the Prediction of our Saviour, that they would be *all offended becauſe of him that night*. And what was the Reaſon, why the Fleſh prevailed againſt the Spirit? Why did theſe honeſt Undertakers fail of performance? Even becauſe they did not follow their Maſter's Advice, they did not Watch and Pray; for had they uſed this means, they had not failed of the end, ſince Jeſus himſelf directed them to uſe this Method, and therefore we may be ſure it would have been ſufficient. Wherefore you may well conclude, that theſe words, *The Spirit indeed is willing, but the Fleſh is weak*, were not intended here for an excuſe of their not watching and praying, but as a reaſon why they ought to do ſo, and conſequently as an aggravation of their fault in not doing it; for ſince there was ſo much need of Vigilance and Devotion, they were the more to blame, that they neglected it.

And thus I have given you, as I am perſuaded, the natural and genuine ſenſe of this place.

Now there are two Points of Inſtruction which I ſhall from hence commend to your ſerious thoughts. 1. That

1. That we look well to it, that we be ſincere and honeſt, and have that *willing Spirit*, which our Saviour acknowledged and commended in his Apoſtles.

2. That we do not altogether truſt to our preſent ſincerity and beſt purpoſes, but becauſe of the weakneſs of the Fleſh, that we watch and pray, and thereby guard our ſelves againſt all Temptations.

1. That we be very well aſſured of our own ſincerity, and the honeſty of our purpoſes, which for the preſent any man may be eaſily aſſured of, if he be ſincere; that is, if he be honeſtly reſolved to do his Duty under all circumſtances of Temptation; for what can a man ever arrive to an aſſurance of, if not of his own preſent intentions? Now the Argument whereby I am to perſuade you to look well to this matter, is of very great force, and it is ſo plainly offered by the circumſtances of this Relation, that there is no avoiding it; and it is this. That if we are for the preſent ſincerely and honeſtly diſpoſed, we have ſome Title to the ſpecial grace and favour of God; whereas Hypocrites and inſincere Perſons have none at all: For this was that, for which our Saviour valued his Diſciples, that they had a *willing Spirit*;

Spirit; and, as I ſhall ſhew more particularly by and by, that was the reaſon why he watched over them, why he continually inſtructed them, why he explained things to them, why he took care to rectifie their miſtakes, and to correct their faults, and to give them all the ways of improvement, becauſe they were honeſt men, and ever intended to behave themſelves like honeſt men: They were all but *Judas* men of great plainneſs and ſimplicity, teachable and willing to be informed of the Truth, open and free in their behaviour, not addicted to any notorious Vice, of a Religious temper and diſpoſition, and every way fit to be trained up to the perfection of Vertue in the School of Chriſt; and therefore our Saviour took a particular care of them, and bore with all their Infirmities, Miſtakes, and Follies, till he had brought them to perfection. Whereas *Judas*, whom he excepted out of this Commendation, *Ye are clean*, was a man falſe and cloſe, covetous and treacherous, and for the compaſſing of his ends, ready for any miſchief; he was a Thief, and kept himſelf a follower of Jeſus longer in all likelihood than he would have done otherwiſe, becauſe *he bore the bag*: He

ſeemed

ſeemed to have become his Diſciple at firſt for no other reaſon, but becauſe he expected to have been ſome great Man in the World under Jeſus, whoſe Miracles had convinced him that he was the Chriſt; but when by the conſtant tenor of Chriſt's Doctrine, and by his Example, he found he was likely to be deceived in that expectation of worldly Greatneſs, he was reſolved to make the beſt he could of his being one of our Lord's Diſciples, and that by making uſe of the Opportunity he had, to get both Money and Favour from the Rulers by betraying him. This was the Character of *Judas*, whom our Lord knew full well before he betrayed him; and he being ſuch a vicious Hypocrite, ſo great a Villain as he was, Jeſus ſeemed not to regard him at all, nor to take any particular care of him, but did e'ne let him go from one wickedneſs to another, till he came to utter Ruin; and for what reaſon ſhould we think, but becauſe he had nothing at all of a Spirit of Honeſty in him, and was therefore incapable of being improved in any degree of Vertue.

This, I ſay, is the Argument, whereby I would recommend to all men that ſimplicity and honeſty of Spirit which was

was diſcernible in the reſt of the Apoſtles, whileſt though they were but very imperfect in Religion and Vertue, in compariſon to what they were afterwards, yet our Saviour did not caſt them off for every fault they were guilty of, for every miſtake they were under, but rather was very tender of them, and took all Opportunities to ſet them right when they were wrong, and to lead them from one degree of Vertue and Goodneſs to another, till at length they became Teachers of Truth, and Examples of Piety to all the World. And this I believe verily is the meaning of thoſe words of our Saviour that occur in the Sixth Chapter of St. *John*, and in other places, that Jeſus would not *caſt away thoſe that the Father had given him*, (*i. e.*) Men of honeſt Minds, and ſincere Diſpoſitions; theſe words alluding to what is commonly ſeen amongſt us, of a Father's committing a Child of probity and a towardly Diſpoſition, to a skilful Maſter, to be Educated and Improved by him, and his expecting a good account of him at laſt: And therefore ſaid our Saviour, *John* 17. 12. *Of thoſe thou haſt given me*, or committed to my care, *I have loſt none, but the Son of perdition*, (i. e.) *Judas* had utter-

utterly fallen off, and miſcarried, becauſe he was a man of a Reprobate diſpoſition; but of thoſe that God had committed to him, (*i. e.*) men of teachable and willing Spirits, he had loſt none, although they had a great many failings, and were often in very great danger.

But I am to make out this Point from the circumſtances of the ſtory in this Chapter and elſewhere, which affords a remarkable inſtance of it in St. *Peter*, to wit, how great is the care of God over a ſincere man to ſave him from utter miſcarrying, notwithſtanding many blameable defects. And I the rather ſhall inſtance in St. *Peter*, becauſe upon every notable Occaſion of inſtructing the reſt of his Diſciples, our Saviour ſtill addreſſed himſelf to St. *Peter*; not that the reſt were unconcerned, but that he was moſt of all concerned, becauſe he moſt of all needed his Inſtructions and Admonitions, as you will plainly ſee. 'Tis true, he had many notable good Qualities, wherein he excelled the reſt; for in quickneſs of Apprehenſion, in boldneſs of Spirit, in concern for his Maſter, in Activity and Induſtry, in forward Undertaking, and in contempt of Danger, he ſeemed to out-do all his Brethren. But this

this forward, vigorous, and active Man made more falls, as far as we can find, than any other of the Apoſtles did; but being alſo ſincere and honeſt, he was therefore more watched, and particularly inſtructed than the reſt. And I cannot but obſerve this by the way, that the reaſon why our Saviour addreſs'd himſelf in particular to *Peter*, ſo much oftner, than to the reſt of the Apoſtles, was not that he gave him a more ſingular Power and Authority than he did the reſt, but becauſe being a man of a more forward and active Spirit, than all the reſt, in doing well, he commonly did better; in doing ill, he moſtly did worſe than the reſt, which is a ſufficient account of that particular application of our Saviour to him, either in commending or reproving him. And thus when *Peter*'s forwardneſs of Spirit led him to ſpeak well, before any of his Brethren were ready, as when he confeſſed that Jeſus was *the Son of the living God*, that being what they all aſſented to, Jeſus in commending him, commended all, in encouraging him, he encouraged all; and though he alluded to his Name in particular, by ſaying, *Thou art Peter*, yet that which followed, *and upon this Rock will I build my Church*, and

and the gates of Hell ſhall not prevail againſt it, was equally a commendation and encouragement of the Faith of the reſt, and of their profeſſing that Faith, upon which the Church was to be founded ſo ſurely, that it ſhould never be deſtroyed. So likewiſe when he rebuked his Maſter, for fore-telling what he muſt ſuffer, and had that ſevere Reprimand from him, *Get thee behind me, Satan, for thou ſavoureſt not the things that be of God*, &c. Neither was this ſpoken ſo particularly to him, as not to extend to the reſt; it was ſaid alſo for their Reproof and Inſtruction, who were as unwilling as *Peter*, that Jeſus ſhould die an ignominious Death; and as ignorant as he, what wiſe and good ends Divine Providence would bring about by it.

Wherefore I mention *Peter* rather than any one of the reſt of the Diſciples, as an Inſtance, how a *good and honeſt Heart*, a ſincere Mind, or (as it is called in the Text) a *willing Spirit*; how this, I ſay, puts a man under the ſpecial Care and Protection of Divine Grace, becauſe this very Admonition of the Text, though intended to all, was particularly directed to *Peter*; and it is very remarkable how our Saviour, like a watchful and prudent Guide,

Guide, took all Opportunities to ſet him right. For,

1. It is plain that *Peter* was one who preſumed more than enough upon the ſtrength of his own Reſolutions: He it was, that upon our Lord's fore-telling the dangerous Temptation that was near, did with ſome confidence in himſelf make this boaſt, *Though all men ſhould be offended becauſe of thee, yet will I never be offended; and though I ſhould die with thee, yet will I not deny thee.* Which was no doubt ſpoken alſo with a very honeſt intent and purpoſe, as it was by the reſt of the Apoſtles, who followed his Example; he was no Hypocrite, or Villain in what he ſaid, as *Judas* was, but meant all that he promiſed, and at that time verily believed, that he ſhould be as good as his word, whileſt *Judas* was at that Minute bent to betray him. But this honeſt Man wanted experience of himſelf, and preſumed too faſt upon his own Ability, and therefore our Lord took this Occaſion to lay a Foundation in him, of a better underſtanding of himſelf, for he ſaid unto him, *Wilt thou lay down thy life for my ſake? Verily I ſay unto thee, the Cock ſhall not crow, till thou haſt denyed me thrice.* A ſeaſonable intima-

intimation it was, that his Master in the very heighth of his confidence, should tell him, That he would thrice deny him, before the next day was well begun: And this forewarning, together with the experience of his own infirmity afterward, no doubt ſerved to make him ever after a more conſiderate and watchful man, and tended to add modeſty and humility to his other good qualities.

2. If we go a little farther, we find him ſleeping with the reſt of the Diſciples, though our Lord had left them to *pray that they might not enter into temptation*: And that when Jeſus came and found them aſleep, he ſaid unto *Peter* who had undertaken ſo much before, *What could ye not watch with me one hour: watch and pray that ye enter not into temptation: the ſpirit indeed is willing, but the fleſh is weak.* By which words he gave him fully to underſtand, that he was not acquainted with his own Infirmities, and had not that ſenſe of the neceſſity of watchfulneſs and prayer, which he ought to have had at that time.

3. It was but a little while after, that *Judas* conducted the Officers and Soldiers, that were ſent by the High-Prieſt to take Jeſus; and when they had laid hands

on him, *Peter's* forward ſpirit led him into another miſtake: *He drew his ſword and ſtruck a Servant of the High-Prieſt, and ſmote off his ear:* Which though well meant in zeal for his Maſter, was yet an undutiful reſiſtance of Authority, and betrayed a raſh anger. But neither did our Saviour leave him here without that admonition, which was neceſſary to make him wiſer and better. Then ſaid Jeſus unto him, *Put up thy ſword again into its place, for all they that take the ſword, ſhall periſh by the ſword: thinkeſt thou, that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he ſhall preſently give me more than twelve Legions of Angels? But how then will the Scripture be fulfilled, that thus it muſt be?*

4. That tryal of him, that followed immediately, almoſt, at the High-Prieſt's Hall, ſhewed him to be as yet a very imperfect man, and one that wanted that reſolution which he thought himſelf a Maſter of. Indeed, he ſhewed a little more courage than the reſt of his Brethren, inaſmuch as they fled upon their Maſter's being apprehended, but he followed at a diſtance to obſerve the event; but this ſerved only to entangle him in a more ſhameful fault than theirs, that ran clear away

away, even to the denying of his Lord thrice, and the laſt time with imprecations; he that had ſo forwardly confeſſed in the Name of the reſt, that Jeſus was *the Son of God*; he that but a few hours before had ſo vehemently declared, that he would rather die with his Maſter, than deny him, when now he ſaw him brought like a Criminal into the High-Prieſt's Hall, altered from what he was before, and his Faith began to fail. It is not improbable, that he had ſome hope his Maſter would deliver himſelf out of their hands by ſome Miracle, becauſe he *ſat among the ſervants, to ſee the end:* But yet the danger was ſo apparent, that he wanted courage to own him till the end was come, and ſo denyed him: And while he ſpake his laſt words of denyal, *the Cock crew: And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter*, Luke 22. 61. Not throwing off all farther care of him, notwithſtanding ſo foul a miſcarriage: *And Peter remembred the words of the Lord, how he had ſaid to him, Before the Cock crow, thou ſhalt deny me thrice: And he went out, and wept bitterly.*

That which I have been driving at all this time, is to ſhew a notable example of the *weakneſs of the fleſh*, in a man ve-

ry apt to be confident of himself, and withal, of the watchful care of our Saviour to correct him, and set him right, and that because he had a *willing spirit*, an honest and sincere disposition, void of malice and falsehood, and was ever desirous to know the truth, and to do his duty. Therefore said our Saviour to him, just before his last combat, *Luk.* 22. 31, 32. *Simon, Simon, behold Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not.* For the Tempter understood *Peter*'s composition, how much *chaff* was mingled with the *wheat*, and what were the inconveniences of his temper, and desired nothing more than full liberty to make use of them, for the overturning of all his good qualities: But said Jesus, *I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not; and when thou art converted, strengthen thy brethren:* (*i. e.*) When thou art satisfied what a great many things are to be mended in thy self, and that those infirmities of thine, which at present thou art not aware of, had like to have been thy utter ruin, but withal that thou hast escaped through the Grace of God; when thou art grown wiser, and more established in all kind

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of goodneſs, then do thou ſtrengthen thy Brethren, be careful of all ſincere perſons that labour under Infirmities, as I have been of thee, take care to improve that which is good in them, and to ſecure them all thou canſt, againſt all their Infirmities.

Thus much concerning the great advantage of ſincerity, that it doth entitle a man to the ſpecial favour and protection of God; and ſo what we are to learn by all, is to lay this Foundation of well-doing, which our Saviour acknowledged and commended in his Apoſtles; that is, a willing mind, and an honeſt diſpoſition; for then we are in a condition to be watched over by the Divine Grace.

But having ſhewn how valuable in the ſight of God is a willing ſpirit, and an honeſt mind, I proceed in the

Second place, to urge our Saviour's exhortation; and that is, notwithſtanding this to *watch* and to *pray*, that we enter not into temptation; for though the ſpirit be willing, yet the fleſh is weak: For if ſincerity could of it ſelf ſupport a man without any farther care and help, we had never heard of the drunkenneſs of *Noah* and *Lot*, the murder and adultery of *David*, and the fall of *Peter*;

we had never met with any inſtances of the weakneſs of human Nature in men very honeſtly diſpoſed, whoſe examples ſhew us the neceſſity of watchfulneſs and prayer, the means we are directed by our Saviour to uſe; and if we do uſe theſe means, if we do ſet the advantage of care and prayer againſt the inconvenience of human frailty, we ſhall never fall. For it was not only for the inſtruction of St. *Peter*, that our Lord gave the exhortation of the Text, to *watch* and *pray*, but for the inſtruction of all the reſt of the Apoſtles; and not for their inſtruction only, but it was for ours alſo in all Ages, that he left this direction with them. They were not always to expect, that the ſpecial Grace of God would attend them, and either keep them from great faults, or ſet them right again after their miſcarryings, while they neglected to acquaint themſelves with their own hearts, and to take care of their actions, and to ſeek the aſſiſtance of God's Spirit: And we much leſs, who have been longer under the guidance of God's Grace, than they had been, even from our infancy, ever ſince we were baptized, and taken into the Covenant of Grace, who have alſo had the inſtructions

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of their examples, and the uſe and benefit of our Lord's admonitions to them, and have been guilty of more neglects and miſcarryings, than they were, who moreover have been educated to a more perfect underſtanding of the Doctrine and Nature of Chriſtianity, than as yet they had attained to; under theſe circumſtances we are not to expect the watchful care of God's Spirit over us, to lead us out of temptation, and to *deliver us from evil*, if we do not watch our ſelves, and to watchfulneſs add prayer, *that we enter not into temptation*: We are not to truſt to our general good purpoſes, and honeſt ways, but to remember the weakneſs of our fleſh, (*i. e.*) the unſteadineſs of our purpoſes, the mutability of our affections, the deceitfulneſs of our hearts, and therefore to ſupply all our defects with what diligence and circumſpection we can, and in doing all this, to be very earneſt in our Prayers, that God would crown all with his Grace: This is the way to be *ſtrong in the Lord, and in the power of his might*. And we are undoubtedly ſafe, if we continually keep our ſelves under the wings of his Grace, and put our ſelves under his protection by watchfulneſs and pray-

er; *For the effectual fervent Prayer of a righteous man availeth much:* It availeth much for another, much more for himself; it availeth much for the procuring of temporal blessings, much more for spiritual and eternal: God does not always crown the industry of a man in his labouring for the good things of this World, with desired success; and sometimes he sends them to the lazy, and bestows them upon those that never pray: But the most necessary things, a good mind, the best wisdom, the improvements of the Soul, he ever gives to the diligent, and to those that depend upon him by Prayer, and never otherwise: And this is a plain conviction, that if we are *barren and unfruitful in the knowledge* of God, if we make no progress in Virtue, nor move at all towards Perfection, it is our own fault, who have so ready a way to gain that help from God, which will not fail to better our Natures, and to strengthen us in every good work, and to deliver us from temptation. I have already told you, how vain a thing it is to plead frailty and infirmity, for not watching and praying, since for that very reason our Saviour directs us to watchfulness and prayer, because altho'

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the ſpirit is willing, yet the flesh is weak: And it is to as little purpoſe to make the ſame plea for thoſe miſcarriages, that are the effects of our infirmity, ſince there is this to make them the effects of wilfulneſs too, that we have neglected to conſider our own weakneſs, and to go to God for help: And what ſhould be more eaſie and natural, than for a frail Creature to have recourſe to the Fountain of his being, and the Author of all good, the God of Power and Mercy, for a ſupply of his own defects? We are not therefore excuſable, if we do it not conſtantly and earneſtly, when ſo much depends upon it.

I have but one Motive more to lay before you, but that methinks a very prevailing one; and that is, that our bleſſed Maſter himſelf, in whom there was no ſin, nor ſinful infirmity, he, I ſay, himſelf, who ſo little needed any other ſtrength but his own, practiſed that Advice which he gave to his Diſciples, he watched and prayed when the hour of temptation was coming on, whilſt his Diſciples threw away their time, and we ſee the different effects of their different behaviour: Our Lord *witneſſed a good Confeſſion*, but his ſlothful Diſciples fled away

away ſhamefully; and *Peter* the moſt forward of all a little before, miſcarryed the moſt ſhamefully of all, and denyed his Maſter: A very inſtructing example to ſhew us, how much depends upon Prayer, and how unreaſonable a thing it is to complain of the Infirmities of our Natures, and the difficulty of ſtanding againſt temptations, when we have ſo ready, but withal ſo neceſſary a means of relief, that Jeſus himſelf made uſe of it. And ſurely one main reaſon why he he did ſo, was that we might be inſtructed by his examples, how we ought to fortifie our ſelves againſt the temptations of the World: *He was tempted for us*, becauſe we alſo were to be tempted, and he prayed under his temptation for our ſakes too, that we might learn of him the way to overcome temptations, and to be always prepared againſt them. Let us therefore (my Brethren) remember the words of our Lord Jeſus, *Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation:* let us alſo remember the example of our Lord, who himſelf watched and prayed, though he of all men that ever lived, leaſt needed any aſſiſtance againſt temptation: Let us enter into the Church, and frequent the Publick Prayers, and let us enter into

to our Cloſets, and never omit our Prayers to God in ſecret: For by every ſuch omiſſion, we looſe an opportunity for our Souls, we weaken our dependance upon God, we lie more open to danger from within and from without, and have made one ſtep more backward, and are farther from the Grace of God.

In a word, let us purge our ſelves from all inſincerity and hypocriſie, and be ſure that we do not ſuffer the guilt of any wilful ſin to lie upon us, and ever keep our ſelves from preſumptuous ſin; and to this general habit of honeſty, let us add a jealouſie over our ſelves, doing like thoſe that depend upon the Grace and Providence of God; for if we continue thus doing we ſhall not fall, and that becauſe *God is our help*, who is not wanting to prevent us by his Grace, and will therefore never fail to follow us with it, whilſt we walk in his ways, and ſtudy to pleaſe him in all things, and humbly depend upon him for our Safety in this World, and our Salvation in the World to come.

The

The Fifth Sermon.

MATTH. IV. 10.

Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.

HERE are two Rules to be obſerved:

I. *To worſhip and ſerve God.*
II. To worſhip and to ſerve him *only*.

And theſe are Rules of both Teſtaments, and in truth Laws of Nature, and therefore they that violate them *are without excuſe*.

My deſign is, to lay before you ſome of the principal Duties preſcribed in theſe Rules, with the ſins that are oppoſed to them.

Now in the firſt place, to *worſhip God* is to honour him as God, which conſiſts chiefly in two things, *viz.* In a right eſteem

ſteem of him, and in the expreſſion of it.

1. In the eſteem, (*i. e.*) in believing God to be the Soveraign Being, infinite in all perfections, in duration, in wiſdom and in power, and above all in goodneſs; from hence it is, that affections ſuitable to ſuch an eſteem of God are alſo Worſhip, becauſe they are the moſt real acknowledgments of the Divine Attributes: He that truſts in the wiſdom and power of God, more than in all the world beſides, aſcribes to him the honour of infinite wiſdom and power; he that fears his diſpleaſure and *trembles at his word*, gives him the honour of his infinite holineſs; he that loves him above all things, doth thereby effectually confeſs his infinite goodneſs: By ſuch apprehenſions of God, and diſpoſition towards him, we worſhip him in our Hearts and Souls.

2. As to the outward worſhip of God, it conſiſts in ſuch actions, as either by God himſelf, or by the common conſent of Mankind, or by the nature of the thing, are made expreſſions of Divine Honour, and of the worſhip of the Heart. *Sacrifices* have been ever eſteemed marks of Divine Honour, given to that Being to whom they were offered; and God appro-

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priated them to himſelf in the Covenant he made with his own People, *He that ſacrificeth unto any God, ſave unto the Lord only, he ſhall be utterly deſtroyed*, Exod. 22. 20. Whether Sin-offerings, or Thank-offerings, they were teſtimonies and declarations of God's Soveraignty, that he was Lord of all, and the Giver of all, to whom all praiſe and obedience was due. For this reaſon the Chriſtian Worſhip, which knows no *Sacrifice for Sin*, but that which was never to be offered but once, and which has taken away the ſlaying of Beaſts, and the killing of Birds; the Chriſtian Worſhip it ſelf, I ſay, is called a *Sacrifice: By him*, ſays the Apoſtle, (*i.e.*) by Chriſt, *let us offer the ſacrifice of praiſe to God continually*, Heb. 13. 15. For though the groſs Sacrifices were left off, yet there was an incommunicable Worſhip of God that remained, *viz.* the more ſpiritual Sacrifices of Prayer and Thankſgiving, which were the true meaning of the Sacrifices before Chriſtianity, and therefore a more excellent Worſhip than they: For Sacrifices were but the Rites and Ceremonies of Prayer and Thankſgiving; a Sacrifice for Sin, was but the outward Rite of calling upon God for Mercy; a Sacri-

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fice of Praiſe, was but the outward Rite of offering Praiſe; and therefore Prayer and Thankſgiving are proper expreſſions of Divine Honour, inaſmuch as they are in effect the ſame with Sacrifices, and indeed a more excellent Worſhip, than what was anciently called by that name. And there are theſe two things, which make them to be proper expreſſions of honouring God, as God.

1. The matter of Religious Invocation, which is either to pray to God; or to give him thanks for thoſe things which he only can give, and for every thing which we either need, or have received, and this makes Prayer and Thankſgiving to be an acknowledgment of God's Omnipotence, Soveraignty, and Infinite Goodneſs.

2. Our calling upon him at all times, and in all places, which is a clear acknowledgment of his Omnipreſence, and Infinite Knowledge. And hence it is that *hearing of Prayer* is one of thoſe Titles, wherewith the Pſalmiſt addreſſed himſelf to God, *Pſalm* 65. 2. *And thou that heareſt Prayer, unto thee ſhall all fleſh come.* For when we ſpeak to an inviſible Being, we can have no aſſurance that we are heard, but only this aſſurance, that the

the Being is every-where preſent, and therefore though we ſee him not, yet we know that he is with us, and our Prayer is not loſt.

And they are theſe two things, each of which diſtinguiſhes that which in Religion we call Prayer and Thankſgiving, from asking benefits of one another, and giving thanks for benefits received; that the latter ſuppoſes a limited power, the former an abſolute power over all things, and is expreſſed very often by deſiring ſuch things of God, as he only can beſtow. And again when we ask fit things of one another, it is within the lines of civil communication, by ſpeaking, if preſent, by meſſages, if abſent; but when we ſpeak to God, we ſpeak to an inviſible Being, whom we therefore acknowledge to be every-where preſent.

And in theſe two things, that is, in Prayer and Thankſgiving, or to include both in one expreſſion, in Religious Invocation, the Subſtance of Divine Worſhip conſiſts, and all other inſtances of it may be reduced to this:

Thus it is an Act of Divine Worſhip, to dedicate, or ſet apart Places for Prayer and Thankſgiving; for the erecting

of Houſes for the Service of an inviſible Being, is an acknowledgment of his Omnipreſence, no leſs then calling upon him there. Thus bodily Adoration, *Bowing*, *Kneeling*, or *Proſtrating*, are Acts of Divine Worſhip alſo, when they are paid to an inviſible Being, becauſe they too ſuppoſe the preſence of it every-where, to receive thoſe outward Honours, and to take notice of them.

And all this together, is that which we call *the immediate Worſhip of God*; becauſe it is all an addreſs or application to him: This is what we commonly mean by *Religious Worſhip*, though in a larger ſence all Piety may be ſo called, and he that obeys God in all things, worſhips him, becauſe he makes an effectual acknowledgment of all the Divine Attributes.

2. Since we know what it is to worſhip God, nothing ſhould be more eaſie, than to underſtand that other Rule, mainly intended in the words of the Text, That *God only is to be worſhipped*: *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him ONLY ſhalt thou ſerve*: (*i. e.*) Infinite Perfection is to be attributed to him only, Infinite Knowledge, or Power, or Goodneſs, or Preſence, or Dominion is

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to be aſcribed to him only; he only is to be loved and reverenced and truſted in above all things, and to be abſolutely obeyed; to him alone we are to perform thoſe Acts of Worſhip, which imply any part of that acknowledgment; and therefore to none but him are Religious Supplications, and Interceſſions with Thankſgivings to be offered; beſides him no other inviſible Being ought to be addreſſed unto by us: To him only we are to pay thoſe bodily Adorations of Kneeling, Bowing, and Falling-down, which are properly Religious; that is, which accompany and go along with Prayer or Thankſgiving, or any acknowledgment of a Divine Perfection; we are to give to no other Being in the World that outward Worſhip, which by all the circumſtances of it, is *Religious*, or a ſignification of the leaſt Divine Honour.

Upon theſe grounds I intend to build, and now I ſhall proceed to ſhew what thoſe ſins are, which manifeſtly oppoſe and contradict theſe Rules, and they may, I think, be reduced to theſe two, *Atheiſm*, and *Idolatry*.

Firſt, *Atheiſm*, of which there are two ſorts properly ſo called: Either,

I. Not believing that there is a God: Or,

II. Not worſhipping him.

1. Not believing a God; that is, an inviſible Spiritual Being, which is the cauſe of all things; and this is that which is commonly underſtood by *Atheiſm*, to deny the very Being of a God, which as it is the higheſt ſtupidity, and the greateſt corruption imaginable of a Man's Underſtanding, ſo it is fundamentally oppoſite to all pretences of Religion and Worſhip, which ſuppoſes the Being of God; of God I ſay, that is, of a ſpiritual and inviſible Being, which knows and underſtands, which can do all things, and upon which all other things depend. But

2. There is another ſort of *Atheiſm* truly ſo called, which conſiſts with a Belief of the being of God; or at leaſt doth not ſtand in a direct denial of his Being, and that is, not worſhipping him: He that doth not worſhip God before Men, is an Atheiſt to the World; and he that worſhips him not at all, is an Atheiſt before the World, and in the ſight of God too: and there is no reaſon to queſtion, but he that is the one, is the other too. Every wicked Man though he profeſſeth Religion,

Religion, and worſhips God, may indeed be called a Practical Atheiſt, becauſe he lives, as if there were no God. But he that is grown to that degree of impiety, as to make no acknowledgment of him by appearing in his Worſhip, is much more ſo, and doth in effect renounce his Maker before the World, and it cannot be more truly ſaid of any one, than of ſuch a Man, that he lives *without God in the World.* And therefore, although the *Epicurean* Sect acknowledged the Being of a God, yet becauſe they denyed his Providence, and took away all the Foundations of worſhipping him, they were by all men of ſenſe called *Atheiſts:* This however is alſo directly oppoſite to the Rule we are upon, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God.* But

2. *Idolatry* is oppoſed to it likewiſe, and this is that impiety, which the Rule was chiefly deſigned againſt, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve. Idolatry* is a Term in Religion or Divinity, to which we muſt give that ſenſe in which the Scripture uſes it, and I think all are agreed, this to be the ſenſe of it there, That it is *the giving of any Divine Worſhip to a Creature:* (*i. e.*) any part of that Worſhip which is due

due to God only; and therefore these words are a Rule against all Idolatry whatsoever, *Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God*, &c.

Now, 1. All honour which is done to any invisible Being, besides God, by formal Invocation of it, or calling upon it, must therefore necessarily be Idolatry, because it ascribes in the very Nature of the Act Omnipresence to it, which is a Divine Perfection.

2. All the external Honours done to any such Beings, which refer to that Service are also Idolatrous, because they are significations of Divine Honour also, and therefore Dedicating Churches and Altars to them, Bowing, Kneeling, Prostrating, burning Incense, and the like Religious Rites performed to them, are Idolatry.

3. Any Service paid to a created Being, that is either visible or invisible, seen or not seen, present or absent, which Service doth imply that thing to be God, or ascribes any Divine Attribute to it, or much more that Service, which in all circumstances is the very same with what is given to God himself; this also must necessarily be an Idolatrous Service.

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4. The Worſhip of an Image, or any viſible Repreſentation of any thing whatſoever, muſt be Idolatrous; for if it be worſhipped as the Repreſentation of a Creature, it cannot 'ſcape being ſo, if there were no more in it, than that Religious Worſhip is not to be given to the Original: But if it be the pretended Image of the Deity, the Worſhip of it is Idolatrous Worſhip; and the reaſon is plain, becauſe it is ſet there to receive that external Worſhip at leaſt, which is due to that inviſible Being, whom it is ſaid to repreſent. But the Worſhip of God is to be given to him, and to none but him: I paſs by two material things; one is, That the Image-Worſhip of the People is known to be attended with expectation of receiving benefit from the Image itſelf, which makes the Idolatry to be very groſs in them; but inaſmuch as Images are made the Object of outward Acts of Divine Honour, by all that worſhip them, they give to the Image that Worſhip which is to be paid to God only. Another is this, That to pretend to make an Image of God is one of the groſſeſt diſhonours that can be poſſibly done to him, becauſe that ſuppoſes *the Godhead to be like unto wood, or to ſtone,*

and the work of mens hands, and tends to corrupt the Notion of God in all that are made to believe that they are his Images or Repreſentations; but I do not place Idolatry in that, though it be a great aggravation of it, but in the actual worſhipping of it; and that becauſe we are to worſhip the Lord our God, and ſerve him only: but to worſhip Images, is not to worſhip him; for God is one thing, and a pretended Image of him is another. All this I make bold to lay down peremptorily, being well aſſured that theſe kinds of Worſhip are prohibited in this Rule of *ſerving God only*, and that theſe prohibited Worſhips are in the Scripture called Idolatry, which I ſhall now more particularly prove, againſt a certain pretence, That *the true and only Notion of Idolatry is this, and that it is neither more nor leſs than this*, viz. *The Worſhip of the heavenly Bodies, the Sun, the Moon, and the Stars, or any other viſible and corporeal Deity, as the Supreme God, ſo as to exclude all ſenſe and apprehenſion of a ſpiritual and inviſible Godhead.* The plain Engliſh of which is this: That no Man can be an Idolater; that is, not ſuch a Sot, as to take ſomething, which he knows can neither under-

underſtand any thing, nor chuſe one thing before another, to be the Supreme God, and as ſuch, to worſhip it; as for inſtance, he muſt take ſomething, which hath no more of a ſpiritual Nature in it, than a piece of ſtone, or a log of wood, and exclude all reference that it can have to any thing that hath a ſpiritual nature, and he muſt fall down upon his knees to it, and ſpeak to it, and deſire it to bleſs him, and believe that it will do ſo, and he muſt withal take it for his Supreme Deity, and then he ſhall be allowed to paſs for an Idolater; nay more, for one that is not fit to live upon the Earth, but to be *cut off from the People*; as thoſe *Iſraelites* were once to be ſerved, who *enticed their Brethren away to ſerve other Gods.* Now for my own part, I do not think, that even theſe kinds of Worſhippers, if there are any ſuch to be found in the World, as I believe there are not, ought to be thus ſerved; for it were barbarous Inhumanity, to kill thoſe, who ought to be taken care for in an *Hoſpital* proper for them: For what greater madneſs can be imagined, than for a Man at the ſame time to worſhip a ſenſeleſs thing as the Supreme God, and to believe that it is a ſenſeleſs thing, as he muſt

muſt do, if he excludes all apprehenſion of an inviſible and ſpiritual Godhead? For by the Supreme God, all Men underſtand ſomething that is able to help or to hinder, and that knows when to do the one, and when the other, and is willing to do accordingly: And therefore to worſhip either Sun, Moon, or Stars, or any viſible or corporeal Deity, and at the ſame time to exclude all ſenſe and apprehenſion of a ſpiritual and inviſible Godhead, is to worſhip a thing, becauſe I am ſure it knows ſomething, while I am as ſure at the ſame time, that it knows nothing at all; for that which has nothing of a ſpiritual and inviſible nature, has no knowledge of any thing, no more than a block has; and if to worſhip ſuch a thing, knowing it to be ſuch, be all the Idolatry that ever was in the World, I do believe you will all grant, that there never was an Idolater in the World, who might not have been eaſily perſwaded to fall down upon his knees to a Tree, to believe it to be his Father, and to ask it bleſſing; only there is this difference in the caſe, that ſuch a diſtempered Man might poſſibly believe that Tree capable of bleſſing him, but it ſeems the Idolater muſt be more mad than

than ſo, for he muſt at the ſame time believe that what he worſhips, knows nothing of him, and is not, and cannot be concern'd about him, becauſe he excludes all ſenſe and apprehenſion of a ſpiritual and inviſible Godhead in his corporeal Deity. But if the Maker of this Notion did really think, that his Idolater was a Man in his Wits, then he has really made the Idolater to be the very ſame with the Atheiſt, whereas they are two Perſons. This Rule of the Text hath two parts, as I have ſhewn; one, that we are to worſhip God, which he that doth not, is an *Atheiſt*; another, to worſhip God only, which he that doth not, is an *Idolater*. But now he that hath no ſenſe and apprehenſion of a ſpiritual Godhead, and yet worſhips for the Supreme God, ſenſeleſs matter, does not, if he be in his Wits, believe that there is any God at all, and if he pretends to worſhip the Sun, or the Moon, or *Leeks* and *Onyons*, without any reference to any thing, that can ſee or hear, help or hinder, underſtand or chuſe any thing, it is manifeſtly in deriſion of all pretence to Religion and Worſhip whatſoever: So that *the true and only Notion of Idolatry*, is only at laſt a true Notion

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of Atheiſm, very odly repreſented, and ſo, as an ingenious Atheiſt would have done it much better for himſelf. We are therefore to look upon this *True and Only Notion of Idolatry*, to be an over-ſtrained repetition of what has been to much better advantage pretended by thoſe of the *Roman* Communion: *viz.* That a Man cannot be an Idolater, who doth firmly believe there is one God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and who doth worſhip him as the Supreme God and Lord of all. This indeed is ſomething, that is, it is what we underſtand, but then this is very falſe, as I ſhall demonſtrate by plain teſtimony of Scripture.

And in the firſt place, the Text ſeems to give clear evidence againſt it, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only*, &c. For they all ſay, that this ſpeaks of Divine Worſhip, and at other times they grant, that to give Divine Worſhip to any thing that is not God, is Idolatry: But now the Text ſuppoſes, not only that a Man ought to give Divine Worſhip to God, but it expreſly ſays, that he ſhould give it to him only; it is therefore poſſible to give Divine Worſhip to God, and to give Divine Worſhip to ſomething elſe too, which is not

not God, and to do that, they themſelves confeſs to be Idolatry, and therefore it is poſſible to acknowledge and to worſhip one God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, and yet to be guilty of Idolatry; which is a point that I think fit to inſiſt upon ſomething more particularly, becauſe I perceive there are many, that are very loath to have it believed.

And firſt I ſhall inſiſt upon that inſtance, which was the occaſion of theſe words: The Devil promiſed our Saviour, That he would *give him all the Kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them, if he would fall down and worſhip him.* Now I think there is no queſtion, but that to worſhip the Devil is Idolatry; but the Queſtion is, Whether the Devil was ſo arrogant, as to deſire to be worſhipped, ſo, as to exclude the belief, and the worſhipping of God, who is the Supreme Lord of all: But indeed, it ought not to be queſtion'd, that he did not deſire any ſuch thing, but that himſelf acknowledged the Being of God: For in his very firſt Temptation he ſaid, *If thou be the Son of God*, &c. which was a plain acknowledgment of the Being of God; and ſo in his ſecond Temptation, *If thou be the Son of God, caſt thy ſelf down,*

down, for it is written he shall give his Angels charge over thee, &c. So that he did not only acknowledge the Being of God, but he acknowledged also the Truth of the Scripture. Nay, when he promised to Jesus *the Kingdoms of the World, and the glory of them*, if he would *fall down and worship him*; it appears by St. *Luke*, that he did by no means pretend to be the Supreme Disposer and Governour of the World, (*i. e.*) to be the Supreme God, but acknowledged him that was truly so; for thus it is said, *Luk.* 4. 6. *And the Devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, for it is delivered to me, and to whomsoever I will I give it.* Now here the Devil plainly acknowledged, that this Power was but delivered to him, and not originally in him, and this was as plain a signification as could possibly be given, that he did not design to draw our Saviour to worship him as the Supreme Deity, since he confessed a Superiour. Whereas therefore our Saviour answered him, *Get thee behind me Satan, for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God*, &c. It seems very evident, that Divine Worship may be given to that which is not God, by one that acknowledges and wor-

worſhips the true God; for otherwiſe I am ſure it had not been Idolatry to worſhip the Devil in theſe circumſtances, who did by no means require our Saviour to worſhip him as the Supreme God, or not to worſhip him, who really is ſo. And here I cannot but obſerve how inſtructing our Saviour's Anſwer was; for when the Devil tempted him to worſhip him, Jeſus might have refuſed it juſtly enough upon another ſcore, that no Honour was to be given to that Enemy of God and Man; but when omitting that conſideration he ſpoke to the point in this manner, *It is written, Thou ſhalt worſhip*, &c. he laid down a Rule to ſerve his Diſciples in all like caſes, even where they might be called not to worſhip a *Devil* but a *Saint*, not a bad Angel, but a good one. *Thou ſhalt worſhip*, &c. If it be pretended in the behalf of Saints, that they have great power with God in Heaven, and of Angels, that they are his *miniſtring Spirits*, and therefore they are to be honoured with Invocations, and bodily Worſhip by us upon Earth, we are to remember, that when the Devil pretended to have the Power of the Earth delivered into his hands, and promiſed that upon the deſire

ſire of Jeſus, and a little proſtration to him, he would give it to him; our Lord did not give him that anſwer which was peculiar to the particular caſe, as that he was a lying and wicked Spirit, and therefore no ſuch acknowledgment was to be paid to him; but ſuch an Anſwer as ſuppoſed it Idolatry to pay the ſame reſpect to any other created Being: *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God*, &c.

But becauſe the Notion of Idolatry was of neceſſity the ſame under the Goſpel, that it was under the Law, ſince without any new Notions of it, the Apoſtles, who were *Jews*, Preached againſt Idolatry, we cannot go a better way to work to confute this pretence, *That they who acknowledge one Supreme God, cannot be guilty of Idolatry*; than by obſerving what was counted Idolatry under the Law.

1. Now we read 1 *King.* 11. that *Solomon* in his old age *turned away his heart*, and worſhipped other Gods, *viz. Aſhtoreth* and *Milcom*, and *Chemoſh*, and *Molech*: Theſe were the Idols of the Nations round about the *Iſraelites*; and all the World knows, that the Service of Idols is Idolatry. But now, did *Solo-*

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mon, renounce the God of Heaven and Earth, the Supreme Governour of the World, *the God of Abraham, Iſaac, and Jacob?* So he muſt have done according to the modern Notion of Idolatry, or elſe he could not be guilty of it: But if we may believe plain Scripture, ſo he did not; for mark, what is ſaid *v.* 4. *His Wives turned away his heart after other Gods, and his heart was not perfect with the Lord his God, as was the heart of David his Father.* It ſeems then that his heart was not quite turned away from the Lord his God, but it was not perfectly with him, and that becauſe he did not worſhip the Lord his God only, but ſerved other Gods beſides. Again, *v.* 5, 6. *Solomon went after Aſhtoreth the Goddeſs of the Zidonians, and after Milcom the abomination of the Ammonites: and Solomon did evil in the ſight of the Lord, and went not fully after the Lord, as did David his Father.* Now can that be ſaid of one that utterly renounceth the Belief, and worſhip of the Supreme Lord, that his heart doth not go fully after the Lord? Theſe things are ſo plain, that they need no illuſtration. To be ſhort, in the old Teſtament theſe Worſhips were eſteemed and condemned as Idolatry.

1. To worſhip other Beings with the True God, which was the caſe of *Solomon* now mentioned, and of the *Samaritans*, 2 *Kings* 17. 41. *Who feared the Lord, and ſerved their graven Images:* their own Gods.

2. To worſhip Idols only, which ſeemed to be the caſe of *Ahab* and *Manaſſeh*, who had given over the Service of the God of *Iſrael*, but yet were not without all ſenſe and apprehenſion of him; but for all that they addicted themſelves wholly to the Service of falſe Gods.

3. The worſhipping of the True God by a material Image or Repreſentation of him; ſuch, for inſtance, was the Idolatry of the *Golden Calf*, which the *Iſraelites* intended for a Repreſentation of that God which had brought them out of the Land of *Egypt*; as it evidently appears from the Proclamation, *Exod.* 32. *Theſe are thy Gods*, or this is thy God, *O Iſrael, which brought thee up out of the Land of Egypt: and Aaron built an Altar before it, and made a Proclamation, and ſaid*, To morrow *is a Feaſt* to Jehovah, or *to the Lord*. In vain it is ſaid, that the *Iſraelites* fell to the *Egyptian* Idolatry; thus much I am

am willing to grant, that the *Iſraelites* miſſing *Moſes*, took that very Repreſentation of the Supreme God, which they had ſeen in *Egypt*; for it is a fooliſh thing to imagine that the *Egyptians* themſelves were without any ſenſe or apprehenſion of the Supreme God; but that the *Iſraelites* fell to downright *Egyptian* Superſtition, and copied all that they had learnt in *Egypt*, is undeniably falſe from this one argument, that the *Iſraelites* offered Burnt-offerings, and brought Peace-offerings unto the Image they had ſet up, and as *Jeroboam* did afterwards, they *offered Bullocks and Rams* to the Idol, which Beaſts being amongſt the *Egyptians* held Sacred, were never ſacrificed to their Idols; and for that very reaſon God commanded them to be offered to him; ſo that the *Iſraelites* in their Sacrificing, followed their Rule which they had received from God only; but miſſing *Moſes*, they would have a viſible Repreſentation of the True God to go along with them; and for worſhipping it they were called Idolaters, and puniſhed as ſuch. The inſtance of the *Calves of Dan and Bethel*, which *Jeroboam* did ſet up, the worſhipping of which is called Idolatry, is to

the ſame purpoſe; for all he pretended was, that it was *too much for the Iſraelites to go up to Jeruſalem to worſhip: Behold*, ſays he, *thy Gods, O Iſrael, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt*, 1 Kings 12. 28. He did not forſake the God of *Iſrael* to follow other Gods, but he ſet up material Images or Repreſentations of the True God, and it was his Idolatry to worſhip them: Hence the Prophets whom God raiſed up in *Iſrael*, did not charge the Worſhippers of this ſort for Deſerters of the God of *Iſrael*, though they inveighed againſt their Altars: But when *Ahab* fell to worſhip other Gods, it was particularly noted of him, that he did therein what *Jeroboam* did not do; this latter ſort of Idolatry was laid to *Ahab*'s charge, 1 *Kin.* 16. 31. to wit, That, *as if it had been a ſmall thing for him to walk in the ſins of Jeroboam the ſon of Nebat, he went and ſerved Baal, and worſhipped him.*

From all this it is plain, that whereas in the New Teſtament, the Apoſtles bid us *beware of Idolatry*, *my dearly beloved flee from Idolatry*: *Little children keep your ſelves from Idols*: and the like. They being *Jews* muſt neceſſarily by Idolatry mean the worſhipping of the

the true God by Images, or giving any Divine Worſhip whatſoever, any Honour due to God only, giving that I ſay, to any other Being how excellent ſoever, although they that do ſo, do believe and worſhip the Supreme God, the Maker of Heaven and Earth, all the while: For by Idolatry they could underſtand nothing but what went for Idolatry under the Law, ſeeing the Notion of it was not in the leaſt altered, but it continued juſt the ſame that it was before, as theſe very words do witneſs, *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and him only ſhalt thou ſerve.*

But as I entered upon this Argument by diſtinguiſhing between Atheiſm and Idolatry, ſo I ſhall now cloſe it, by comparing them together. Idolatry is indeed a very heinous ſin, becauſe it gives away the Glory of God to another; but Atheiſm is a worſe, becauſe that is a renouncing of the Lord of Heaven and Earth, the Creator of the World; they who do not ſerve the Lord only, are guilty of great impiety; but they who do not ſerve and worſhip him at all, are guilty of a greater impiety. To worſhip God, and to worſhip Angels, to pray to God, and to pray to Saints, to

adore Jeſus Chriſt, and to adore the Virgin, is in part to forſake God and our Saviour; but neither to worſhip or pray to Saints and Angels, no nor to God himſelf, this is utterly to forſake him, and to live without God in the World: Which I do not ſay to extenuate the Crime of Idolatry, but to give every thing its due, and to leave this impreſſion upon our mind, that by how much more we inveigh againſt the Idolatry of others, becauſe it is no leſs than giving ſome of God's Glory to his Creature, by ſo much the more we oblige our ſelves to be conſtant and devout, and in very good earneſt in the Worſhip of the only true God, leaſt by degrees we fall into a Spirit of Irreligion and Atheiſm, and be wholly eſtranged from God, which is a worſe caſe than *Solomon's* was, who falling into the Idolatry of his Neighbours, fell under this Character, *That his heart was not perfect with the Lord, and he went not fully after him.*

To conclude, ſince through the Grace of God it is our Happineſs to worſhip the Lord our God, and to ſerve him only, let us have a care that we go on to worſhip God only, and to be ſure let us re-

remember, that we worſhip him, that we be not ſlothful in Religion, but earneſt and fervent, leaſt we forſake God by a Spirit of Irreligion, which is every whit as damnable as Idolatry. Let it appear by our whole Converſation, that we do indeed worſhip the God that made Heaven and Earth, who only hath power to bleſs us, to protect and keep us in this Life, and to reward us with the enjoyment of himſelf forever.

The Sixth Sermon.

GEN. XXII. 12.

Now I know that thou feareſt God, ſeeing thou haſt not with-held thy ſon, thine only ſon from me.

IN theſe words we may obſerve two things.

I. God's Teſtimony concerning *Abraham, Now I know that thou feareſt God.*

II. The Fact upon which this Teſtimony of God concerning him was grounded, which was his offering his Son *Iſaac* to God, *Becauſe thou haſt not with-held thy ſon, thine only ſon from me.*

1. The Teſtimony of God concerning him, *I know that thou feareſt God*; this I ſay was God's Teſtimony concerning him;

him: For whereas it is ſaid, That *the Angel of the Lord called to him out of Heaven*; it ſeems plain that the *Angel of the Lord*, was no other than the *Angel of the Covenant*, the Son of God himſelf, who did frequently appear to the Patriarchs, for the words are, *Seeing thou haſt not with-held thy ſon, thine only ſon from me*, (*i.e.*) from God; it was God that ſpake to him, and who ſaid, *Now I know that thou feareſt God*. The matter God teſtified of him, was, That he *feared* God; that is, that he believed in God, that he was fully perſwaded of his Infinite Power, Wiſdom, Juſtice, and Goodneſs, and all his Infinite Perfections, and that he was affected ſutably thereunto: This is the meaning of the *Fear of God* in the Scripture, which is a phraſe uſed to comprehend all pious Affections towards him, and is therefore of the ſame latitude with *Faith*, the Praiſe whereof is aſcribed to *Abraham* by the Author to the *Hebrews*. The only thing to be added is this: That we muſt remember, that to fear God, is to fear him as God; that is, before and above all other things, and conſequently to love him, and to truſt in him, and to rely upon him incomparably and infinitely more than upon all the World beſides,

ſides, inaſmuch as the perfections of all others are finite, God only is infinite in all perfections: Now this was that which God teſtified of *Abraham*, in ſaying of him, that he *feared God*; and in the underſtanding of this, there is no difficulty at all. But it may ſeem ſtrange that God ſhould give this teſtimony of him in that manner, wherein we find he did: *Now know I that thou feareſt God*: Now, (*i.e.*) now *thou haſt not with-held thy ſon, thine only ſon from me*: For did not God know the integrity of *Abraham*'s heart before? Is not God *the ſearcher of hearts*, and doth he need our outward actions, that he may judge of our tempers and intentions by them? It is true, we have no other way to come to the underſtanding of one anothers thoughts, but by our words and deeds: But hath God no other way? Yes, without all doubt, he that *knoweth our thoughts afar off*, even before they are born within us, cannot be ignorant of them when they are: But why then doth he ſay, *Now I know that thou feareſt God*? I anſwer, that this is one of thoſe ſayings of God, by which he is pleas'd to condeſcend to the manner of our ſpeaking and converſing with one another. For we with great propriety

uſe

nſe ſuch expreſſions as theſe, upon ſuch extraordinary occaſions: If from my Friend, that hath always profeſſed great kindneſs to me, I receive ſome notable benefit in my diſtreſs, not without hazard to himſelf, it is very proper for me to ſay, *Now I know that he loves me:* Now I know he is indeed a faithful and ſincere Friend, though I had great reaſon to make no doubt of it before; yet this is ſo great a confirmation and ſtrengthening of my belief, that in compariſon thereto, I might be ſaid to know little or nothing of it before: In alluſion to ſuch expreſſions it is, that God uſeth theſe words, *Now I know that thou feareſt God:* Not in intimation of his having now gained greater aſſurance of *Abraham*'s integrity, than he had before. *Abraham* had been for a long time the Servant of God, and had made an open profeſſion of worſhipping and obeying him, and God ſaw all along that he was an upright man, and this no leſs before he was bidden to offer his Son *Iſaac*, than after he had ſtretched forth his hand to ſlay him upon the Altar; and therefore the meaning of theſe words is this, and no more: The thing is now plain and undeniable to all, that thou feareſt God. But why would

would God have *Abraham*'s Faith made ſo plain and unqueſtionable? Why muſt ſuch a tryal as this be made, ſince it could not be to let God into a more thorough knowledge of *Abraham*, than he had before? I anſwer, it muſt be either for the ſake of *Abraham* himſelf, or for the ſake of others, or for both.

Let us firſt ſee what advantage the ſucceſs of this tryal was to *Abraham* himſelf. And

1. I think we need not doubt, that he was a moſt excellent Man all along, yet even this Noble Act of Faith, which is the ſubject of this Chapter, made him yet a greater and a better Man than he was before: For ſo it is, that as by bad actions, bad Men grow worſe, ſo by good ones, good Men grow better, and by exceeding and extraordinary acts of Faith and Virtue they grow much better.

2. *Abraham* was indeed conſcious before of his own Integrity, yet when God put him upon ſo ſevere a tryal as this was, the performance of his Duty, though it did not add to God's aſſured knowledge of *Abraham*'s Integrity, yet it added to the aſſurance which *Abraham* had of himſelf: For though there are no degrees of certainty in God, yet there are in men:

And

And though *Abraham* was well assured before, that he feared God, yet his quitting himself so well upon so extraordinary an occasion, could not but add to his assurance: And that is one advantage that all good men have by those particular tryals of their Faith, which do not happen commonly, that how hard soever they are to Flesh and Blood, yet if they behave themselves as they ought, they gain this satisfaction by it, to be more certainly perswaded of their own sincerity; and doubtless *Abraham* left no ordinary satisfaction of mind in the Conscience of having obeyed God, requiring so hard a thing, especially since God did not leave him to gather the comfort of his sincerity, from his obedience in the way of reasoning, but did also add a particular Revelation to give him the highest assurance that could be had: *I know*, says he, *that thou fearest God*: And so he had the assurance of so concerning a point from God himself, not only for the encrease of his Joy, but that this example might yield good instruction to others, who are not to expect such immediate Revelations: And this brings me to the

Second

Second Answer, That although this tryal of *Abraham*'s Faith could add nothing to the knowledge which God had of his sincerity, yet it was very beneficial to others, that he should be so tryed, and that upon his good and worthy carriage under it, God should so plainly and particularly testifie his integrity; we are therefore to mind attentively the instruction, that *Abraham*'s example, and God's approving his sincerity affords to the World: And the

First point of Instruction I shall name is this: That that Faith in God, which will gain his approbation and reward, is a lively and working Faith. When we consider, that God himself vouchsafed upon so eminent an act of Faith, as that of *Abraham*'s offering up his Son, when I say himself was pleased to condescend to such an expression as this, *Now know I that thou fearest me*; as if the matter hitherto had been uncertain to him, what can we make less of it, than that God took this opportunity, nay that God made this opportunity to declare to the World, that he who should not bring forth the proper Fruits of faith in God, and fear of God, shall be reckoned of by him, as one that hath no Faith at all, no fear of God

God at all; and what is thus true of the fear of God, is true of Truſt in God too; I have already noted, that what is here called *the fear of God*, is by the Author of the *Hebrews* called *Faith*; and therefore if our fear of God, our apprehenſion of his Almightineſs, his juſtice, and wiſdom, holineſs, and ſoveraignty, will not be at all regarded or owned by him, unleſs it doth produce a conformity of our actions to his will, but we ſhall on the contrary be looked upon, as if we did not fear him at all, the argument is very ſtrong, that our faith ſeperated from the performance of that which God requires and expects from us, will not be looked upon as Faith, it will not be the *Faith by which a Man is juſtified.* For I beſeech you Brethren, is not the fear of God, a belief of his juſtice, and his power, and his holineſs, and his infinite perfections, and ſomething more than a bare belief of them, *viz.* ſuch a belief as is accompanied with ſome awe, dread, and reverence of God? But if Faith working by inward Fear, and yet failing to produce the performance of what God expects from us, will not be owned as the fear of God, when we come to ſtand or fall by his Sentence, then how much leſs

ſhall

ſhall mere Faith or Perſwaſion be reckoned as any thing worth, when ſeparated from the fruits of it in Life and Action? Since upon *Abraham*'s offering up his Son according to God's Command, God was pleaſed to ſay, *Now I know that thou feareſt God:* We cannot imagine what could have been ſaid on the other ſide, if he had refuſed to hearken to God's Voice, but this, *Now I know that thou doſt not fear God.* I will not therefore diſpute, nay I need not diſpute, whether a Man, who upon the tryal of his Obedience, departs from his Duty, whether he (I ſay) may not yet be ſaid to believe in God, and to fear God, and to ſtand in ſome awe of his Juſtice and Power; for whether this may be truly ſaid or not, yet it is all one, as to his acceptance with God: God will not own that to be Faith, or Fear, or Truſt, or Love, or Dependance upon God, which doth not produce the doing of his Will, and the fulfilling of his Commands, when he is pleaſed to try our Obedience in any notable inſtance; wherefore thoſe words, wherein God condeſcends to our manner of ſpeaking, *Now I know that thou feareſt God*, are a natural intimation of this great Truth, that nothing will

paſs with him for the fear of God, but that which produces a conformable Practice and Obedience, in all the tryals of our ſubmiſſion to his Will: for undoubtedly God knew the Integrity of *Abraham*'s Heart before, and therefore ſince he would not give this Teſtimony to him, till he had made it plain by this eminent act of Obedience, and ſince he gave this Teſtimony, as if he had but now been aſſured of it, what inſtruction doth this yield more readily, than that no Man ſhall be acknowledged by God, to be one that fears him, but he that upon tryal doth what God requires; and therefore that we ſhould not preſume upon the goodneſs of our Hearts and Intentions towards God, when our Actions contradict our Pretences: It is true, God ſees the Qualities and Diſpoſitions of our Minds with an Infallible Judgment, but we not ſo certainly; it is hard for us to tell what degree of Faith or Fear is proper to God's Children, is juſtifying, or ſaving: But if in the hardeſt tryals of thy Obedience, thou doſt keep God's Commandments, then thou art ſure that thou feareſt God; and becauſe God would have thee try thy ſelf by this Rule, he was pleaſed to teſtifie his own knowledge, that *Abraham* feared

feared him, upon *Abraham*'s ready Obedience, as if he had not known it before.

2. Another point of Inſtruction, and of good uſe in all Ages of the World is this, That God hath ſome Servants, and Worſhippers, who are not hired to the Profeſſion of ſerving him, by the worldly eaſe, profit, and ſecurity, that Religion brings, and who, when that expectation fails them, will not turn their backs upon him, to chuſe another Maſter. The Devil inſinuated againſt *Job*, That he ſerved God, becauſe *God had made an hedge about him, and about his Houſe, and all that he had on every ſide, becauſe he had bleſſed the work of his hands, and increaſed his ſubſtance in the land: but if God would put forth his hand, and touch all that he had, then he would curſe him to his face:* (*i. e.*) That then he would be as profane, as he was before godly in outward appearance: But upon tryal it proved otherwiſe, and he retained his Integrity, ſaying, *Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive evil*, Job 2.10. Such another inſtance of this kind was *Abraham*, God had bleſſed him with great Encreaſe and Proſperity upon the leaving of his Coun-

try, and there was nothing wanting to compleat his Deſires, but an Heir to his Bleſſings, which God had a long time denyed him, and at length gave him. But it might be hitherto objected againſt the ſincerity of *Abraham*'s fear of God, and dependance upon him, that he perceiving how much for the better it was, that he left his Country at the Call of God, and finding now that all things went well with him, did therefore make profeſſion of ſerving the only true God, becauſe he found that it was the way to compaſs all that his heart could deſire in the World: How therefore ſhould it appear that he behaved himſelf Religiouſly out of Conſcience of his Duty, in an abſolute and entire dependance upon God's Soveraign Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs? And that was a thing very neceſſary to be made out, for the Credit of Religion in the World, and to demonſtrate the ingenuity and ſincerity of the Righteous. There could be no other way ſo effectual, no demonſtration ſo clear as this, that *Abraham* without murmuring and diſputing ſhould let go the deareſt of all his Poſſeſſions, in obedience to the Command of God; and this was the tryal God made of his ſincerity. There was nothing that he

he held more dear to him than his only Son; for whoſe ſake it was, that he did ſet a value upon all the reſt of his Poſſeſſions; well therefore might be ſaid upon his ready compliance with this ſevere Command, *Now I know that thou feareſt God:* This being as much as to ſay, Now thy ſincerity is put beyond all queſtion, and all Men muſt acknowledge, that thou art in good earneſt, what thou haſt all along pretended to be, one that truly feareſt God, and who therefore doſt that which is good, not for worldly and mercinary Ends, but becauſe thou art abſolutely reſolved to depend upon God's Wiſdom and Goodneſs, in doing every thing that he requires. And we muſt not think, Brethren, that this Teſtimony of *Abraham*'s Faith and Sincerity was given him only for his own ſake, but for the ſake of all good Men, that ſhould in any Age of the World tread in the ſteps of *Abraham*'s Faith, *viz.* That all Religious Men are what they are, not for worldly Reſpects, but for Conſcience towards God. And therefore the tryal of *Abraham*'s Faith did not only vindicate him, but all God's faithful Servants to the end of the World from the charge of Hypocriſie, and pretending Religion for

worldly Ends: Indeed he was tryed in the moſt extraordinary inſtance that could be well thought of, and there was this reaſon for it, becauſe he was to be the *Father of the Faithful*, the great Example of Faith and Religion: And it well became him, who was to have ſo great an Honour conferr'd upon him in all Ages, to undergo ſuch a tryal of his Faith, as might not only be a ſtanding Example of our Duty, but a means to vindicate our Sincerity, againſt the Reproaches of the World, though we be not tryed as *Abraham* was. For if Religion in the general be charged with the Hypocriſie of compaſſing worldly Advantages, under a pretext of Conſcience, we deſire them to look to the Example of our Father *Abraham*, and to conſider the proof that he gave of his Sincerity, and God's Teſtimony concerning him, *Now I know that thou fearest God.* And this is the temper and diſpoſition of all *Abraham*'s Children, that they depend upon God's Providence, not becauſe they have a good Eſtate, that they are righteous and juſt; not becauſe it is the way to thrive, that they ſerve God; not becauſe he *makes an hedge about all they have*; and obſerve the Rules of Religion,

not

not merely becauſe they are under no unuſual temptations to the contrary, and the like, but becauſe believing in God, and fearing and loving him in good earneſt, they are perſwaded they ought ſo to demean themſelves in expectation of his Favour, which is *better than Life*, and of his Rewards in a better World. In ſhort, *Abraham* the *Father of the Faithful* was therefore tryed in this manner, that there might be in him an undeniable inſtance of the ſincerity, and ingenuity of true Believers to the end of the World, who live in all good Conſcience, not expecting the profit of this World in recompence of their Piety and Juſtice, and that Religion will ſecure their Bodies from Sickneſs, their Goods from Rapine, their Names from Reproach, their Perſons from Affronts, and their courſe of Life from common, or from unuſual Troubles and Afflictions: *Abraham* and his Children do not traffick with Heaven by their Prayers and Charity, to ſecure or encreaſe their Poſſeſſions on Earth: And though God hath often bleſſed good Men, as he did *Abraham*, with ſtrange proſperity in this World, yet this was not their end, nor the reaſon of their dependance upon God,

and doing his Will; but they were ſuch as they were, by Faith: *By faith they wrought righteouſneſs*, Heb. 11. 33. (*i. e.*) They did that thing which God required, becauſe they expected an heavenly Country, and believed God to be *a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, though not always with the proſperity of this Life, yet without fail with thoſe pure and raviſhing Joys of a better World, which will ſhortly begin and never end. To conclude this point, it hath been very often the Charge of the World upon all the Profeſſors of Piety, that in their Hearts they are as bad as others, whatever their appearance be, that they are as much in love with the Wealth and Pleaſures of this Life, as thoſe that profeſs to make them their end; and therefore to vindicate the ſincerity of his Servants, God does ſometimes make them undeniable demonſtrations of the falſhood of this Charge. Theſe are the principal points of Inſtruction, that are contained in the Teſtimony God gave to *Abraham*. I paſs on to the Second General in the Text, *viz.*

II. The Fact upon which this Teſtimony of God concerning *Abraham* was grounded, which was his offering up his Son

Son *Iſaac* to God, according to that Command which he had received, *Becauſe thou haſt not with-held thy ſon, thine only ſon from me.* And here I ſhall briefly conſider,

1. The Nature of the Fact: And
2. The Nature of the Tryal, which the Fact ſuppoſes.

1. The Nature of the Fact, which was, his *ſtretching forth his hand to ſlay his ſon upon the altar*: And all I ſhall ſay, as to this matter, is, that God in that caſe did not command Murder, which is a thing that he had abſolutely forbidden; for the Command of God made it not to be Murder, if it had been effected, as it was fully deſigned on *Abraham's* part. God is the abſolute Lord of Life and Death, and can without doing any wrong take away Life at his pleaſure, and he may do it which way he pleaſes, by commanding *Abraham* to kill his Son, as well as by commanding a Fever to do it: If *Abraham* had not had that Command, his Intention had been wicked; ſuch ſlaying were murderous, not commanded; but the Command of God, who hath an abſolute Right to diſpoſe of every Man's Life, made it not to be Murder, if it had been effected indeed. This is enough

for

for the Nature of the Fact conſidered in itſelf. But

2. We are to conſider it, as it was a tryal of *Abraham*'s Faith, and ſubmiſſion to God, and procured that Teſtimony, *Now I know that thou feareſt God.* And here there are theſe two things very remarkable:

1. That God ſingled out his beloved Poſſeſſion to be offered forthwith for a Sacrifice to himſelf, *Take now thy ſon, thine only ſon Iſaac whom thou loveſt, and get thee into the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt-offering, upon one of the mountains, which I will tell thee of.* God laid before him all the ſtings of ſo hard an Injunction, *Take thy ſon*, and that *thine only ſon*, I know thou loveſt him dearly, but yet he muſt be a Sacrifice to me, and a Sacrifice offered by thine own hand. This was ſuch a ſaying, as that of Jeſus teaching the height of ſincere Religion: *He that will be my diſciple muſt deny himſelf: He that loveth father or mother, or children, or houſes or lands, or his own life more than me, is not worthy of me:* For we cannot think that he who would give up ſuch a Poſſeſſion to God, to wit, his only Son, would deny him any thing: had all his Flocks

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and his Herds, his whole Wealth and Poſſeſſions, nay had himſelf been called for, to become a Sacrifice to God, he that denyed not to God his only Son, would not have denyed him theſe. Here was an example indeed of abſolute Reſignation to God, of Univerſal Acquieſcence in his Will: Here was indeed the Spirit of true Religion, that *Abraham* counted nothing too dear for his Maker; for this Command was in effect, as if God had ſaid, "Take now "all that thou haſt, without exception "of any thing, be thou as naked as "when thou cameſt into the World, "ſtrip thy ſelf of every thing, and lay "it before me, to be diſpoſed of, as "I pleaſe: And had this been demanded, had all been required, he that offered his only Son, would with the ſame readineſs have parted with all his Poſſeſſions. Herein therefore conſiſted the tryal of *Abraham's* Faith and Obedience, which the Fact ſuppoſes, that when the Queſtion was, Whether he loved God above all things, and feared him above all things, and truſted in him above all things? this one ſingle act was a demonſtration that he did: Which ought to put us in mind, that

that God requires an entire Obedience to, and Dependance upon himſelf, and the giving up our moſt deſirable Poſſeſſions to him, when his Word, or his Providence calls for them, and that thus we are to be diſpoſed, if we be the Children of *Abraham*, who was the *Father of the Faithful.*

It is farther remarkable under this head, that God required *Abraham* to do this forthwith, without diſputing and delaying, and therefore the Command was not only a tryal of what *Abraham* would do in an extreme hard caſe, but alſo how he was conſtantly provided and prepared to do, as became God's Servant in ſuch a caſe: It had not been ſo notable a tryal of the goodneſs of the Man, if he had had a Week, or a Month's time allowed him to lay all things together, and to reaſon out the caſe, and to bring himſelf to a willingneſs by ſuch arguments, as the matter would bear; for then it had been ſuppoſed, that *Abraham* had not duly weighed theſe things before, nor lived in a conſtant and habitual ſenſe of his Duty, which was to obey univerſally, but in ſome extraordinary tryal of his Obedience, muſt have time allowed him

him to prepare himſelf for it. But this tryal coming of a ſudden, and the Command being to be executed forthwith, as it was, plainly demonſtrated, that *Abraham* was always ready to offer up his Son, and could never have been taken unprovided to do the Will of God in the moſt difficult caſe: And therefore his example doth not only inſtruct us, that God is to be entirely ſubmitted to, but that we are to be always ready, and prepared in heart and mind to do well, upon the tryal of our Faith and Obedience, that when it happens in any notable inſtance, we may in ſome meaſure come up to that perfection in Self-reſignation to God, which *Abraham*, as far as it appears by the Hiſtory of him, was a Pattern of: For he did ſet himſelf to part with his *All* without murmuring, and expoſtulating, and diſputing; for ſome ſuch thing ſeems to be intimated in that ſaying, That *he roſe early in the morning*, and immediately went about the execution of God's Command: Though without doubt a man of his humane and tender affections could not but feel pain in receiving this Command of God, and an uneaſie ſtrugling between his Faith in God,

God, and his Affection to his Child; yet it doth not appear, that this delayed his reſolution, to do what God required, or raiſed in him any diſpute, what to conclude upon: But though it was grievous to do it, yet becauſe it was God's pleaſure, he forthwith ſet himſelf to obey. This perfection of Obedience is what we ſhould aim at, for the greater Glory of God, and for our own greater ſecurity; and I will add for our eaſe too: For he that ſubmits to God with the leaſt diſputing, when the tryal is great, doth it with the leaſt pain; but it will be accepted by God, if we prevail at laſt, and do the thing that God expects, in quitting all, to ſecure an Intereſt in him, although not with the ſame readineſs that *Abraham* did, though not without complaint, and ſome diſputing; for God will pardon our Infirmities, if there be a prevailing ſincerity at the bottom, that overcomes the reluctance of Fleſh and Blood. But we ſhould labour to come up to the perfection of *Abraham*'s example, and conſider well with our ſelves, that it is our conſtant profeſſion and pretence, as well as it was *Abraham*'s, to *love the Lord our God with all our hearts*,

hearts, and to hold nothing too dear for him; and withal, that there is nothing which God can require us to quit voluntarily, but he has an abſolute Right to diſpoſe of it, and has abſolute Power to deprive us of it, whether we will or not: When therefore God requires, that we ſhould freely reſign that to him, which he can take away if he pleaſes, it is evident that he requires this, not for his own good, but for ours: If he had needed *Iſaac*, and it had been beneficial to himſelf that *Iſaac* ſhould be killed, what need of *Abraham* to do it? And ſurely it is a mighty reaſon without delay to put God's Will and Command in execution, when we know beforehand, that all is meant for our good, not that God is the better, for that which we quit, but becauſe we are the better for doing it freely and voluntarily.

2. The other remarkable is, That God required of *Abraham* to offer up that his only Son, in whom *his ſeed ſhould be called*, through whom all thoſe great Promiſes were to be fulfilled, which he had made to him before; and herein conſiſted the nobleneſs of *Abraham*'s Faith, that though God ſeemed to require

require that, which would deſtroy all the hope he had by thoſe Promiſes, which hitherto he had firmly believed, yet he believed ſtill, and ſubmitted to do that, which in all appearance was utterly inconſiſtent with the truth of thoſe Promiſes that had been made to him; ſo that he *againſt hope, believed in hope:* And this is that which the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* lays an Emphaſis upon, *chap.* 11. *By faith Abraham when he was tryed, offered up Iſaac, and he that had received the promiſes, offered up his only begotten ſon,* his only Son, through whom thoſe Promiſes were to be fulfilled. Now, though he could in obedience to God get over the difficulty, that Natural Affection laid in his way, yet here was the hard point, how he ſhould get over that temptation to unbelief, which ſtruck at the very Root of his Faith: God had promiſed before, that *in Iſaac his ſeed ſhould be called.* If he believed him now, how did it not appear that he was deceived before? If he was not deceived before, in truſting to that Promiſe, how could he be obliged to do that, which would take away all reaſon to believe that Promiſe any longer? But yet without any

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of this diſputing and contending, he went ſpeedily about the matter, he *roſe up early in the morning*, and takes his Son along with him to that place where he was to offer him up. Now if you ask how it was poſſible for him to believe in God, notwithſtanding this Command; mark what the Apoſtle ſays, *By faith he that received the promiſes, offered up his only begotten ſon, of whom it was ſaid, That in Iſaac ſhall thy ſeed be called; accounting that God was able to raiſe him up even from the dead, from whence alſo he received him in a figure.* That is to ſay, he ſo fully believed all God's Promiſes made to him before, that his Faith was not ſtaggered with the ſeeming inconſiſtancy of this Command of God, with his former Promiſes; but concluded, if there was no other way, God would raiſe up *Iſaac* from the dead; for he accounted, that is, he was fully perſwaded, that God was able to raiſe him from the dead, as in a ſort he did, by ſtopping his hand, when he was about to ſlay him: And now if upon the former conſideration *Abraham*'s ſincerity deſerved ſo high a teſtimony, much more upon this; for it is the higheſt praiſe of Faith, to

truſt that God will make good all his Promiſes, even when the way he takes ſo to do, ſeems to be utterly inconſiſtent with them: Well therefore might God upon this high act of Obedience renew his Covenant with *Abraham*, in ſaying, *By my ſelf have I ſworn, that becauſe thou haſt done this thing, and haſt not with-held thy ſon, thine only ſon from me, that in bleſſing I will bleſs thee, and in thy ſeed ſhall all the Nations of the earth be bleſſed.* And obſerve here I beſeech you, how highly God was pleaſed with this Noble Act of Faith, and how fitly the Promiſe wherewith God immediately rewarded him, agreed to what *Abraham* had done: *By my ſelf have I ſworn, that becauſe thou haſt done this thing, in bleſſing I will bleſs thee:* Words cannot expreſs a greater delight than theſe do: One would think that *Abraham* had done ſome ſingular kindneſs to his God, and if God were to be judged of, as we judge of Man, that God had received an extraordinary favour and benefit from him. But ſuch is the infinite and pure Charity of God, that when we do what is good for our ſelves, it is no leſs pleaſing to him, than if it were beneficial to himſelf: But becauſe

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Abraham had conquered the greateſt Temptation of all to Diſobedience, *viz.* That the thing commanded ſeemed to deſtroy all the Promiſes he had made of a Bleſſed Poſterity, that ſhould deſcend from him by *Iſaac*; God now rewarded his Faith with repeated Aſſurances: *By my ſelf have I ſworn, that in thy ſeed ſhall all the Nations of the earth be bleſſed:* And ſo well might the *Jews* in their Peace-offerings, when they thankfully acknowledged the goodneſs of God, in giving them the poſſeſſion of ſo good a Land, call to mind the offering of *Iſaac*, as the Great Foundation of all thoſe Temporal Bleſſings, which they, as the Seed of *Abraham* enjoyed.

And after ſuch a demonſtration as this, well may we truſt God in all Conditions, if we reſolve to do as *Abraham* did, if we count none of his Commandments grievous, if we do not repine at his Providences, if we go on to ſerve him, and to depend upon him, though when we muſt hope againſt hope; for then God will not fail to ſhew, that we have wiſely truſted in him, and caſt our ſelves upon him, he will ſhew himſelf as much pleaſed with our Faith, as he was

with *Abraham*'s, and will reward it as effectually.

To ſum up all: The Teſtimony of God to *Abraham*'s Faith, was not given merely for his own ſake, but for the inſtruction and encouragement of all true Believers to the World's end, who when they deny themſelves, and do the hardeſt Duties, and are never offended with the Will of God, have, I ſay, a Title to the Teſtimony God gave to *Abraham*: *Now I know that thou feareſt God.* Certainly it would be no mean encouragement to us, it would raiſe up our minds to very great degrees of Joy and Triumph, to have God ſay that to us, that he did to *Abraham*; but we are to remember that it was ſaid to him once for all, in behalf of all his Children, that ſhould *tread in the ſteps of his Faith*: This was not an Honour given to *Abraham* only, though to him principally, and in the firſt place; it was done him alſo for the Credit of Religion in all Ages of the World, and for the comfort and Joy of all Religious and Holy Men and Women to the end of the World.

Wherefore, my Brethren, that we may come in for ſome ſhare in the Praiſe and Reward of *Abraham*'s Faith, let there be in

in none of us *an evil heart of unbelief, in departing from the living God:* The *evil heart of unbelief*, is the evil heart that cauſeth unbelief, (*i. e.*) ſome corrupt Inclination, ſome unmortified Luſt, ſome carnal Intereſt or other. Do thou therefore in the firſt place, when thou haſt an eye upon the example of *Abraham*, conceive how much thou art obliged to take thy ſin, thy dearly beloved ſin, whatever it be, and ſlay it, that is the firſt Sacrifice thou canſt offer to God, to wit, *a broken and contrite heart*, an heart clean from worldly and ſinful luſts. Do this, and thou wilt find nothing too dear for God, thy Faith will then make thee to be entirely at the diſpoſal of his Will and Pleaſure, it will juſtifie and ſupport thee in ſo doing, and the *God of Abraham* will be thine *exceeding great reward.*

The Seventh Sermon.

MATTH. XV. 1, 2, 3.

Then came to Jeſus Scribes and Phariſes, which were of Jeruſalem, ſaying, Why do thy Diſciples tranſgreſs the Tradition of the Elders, for they waſh not their hands when they eat bread? But he anſwered and ſaid unto them, Why do ye alſo tranſgreſs the Commandment of God by your Tradition?

THough never Man was ſo unreproveable in his Doctrine and Example, as our Lord Jeſus, yet never was Man more oppoſed or cavilled at, as the Evangeliſts do abundantly teſtifie, that Hiſtory of him, which they have written for us, being upon the matter made up of the Holy Doctrines which he delivered, the good works in which he was always employed, and the contradictions which he continually met with: And it was ve-

ry neceſſary that ſome inſtances of the laſt ſhould be recorded for our ſakes, that they who profeſs the *Truth as it is in Jeſus*, ſhould not think it ſtrange, if they happened to meet with ſuch oppoſition as their Maſter did; and likewiſe, that by his Anſwers to the Cavils of his Adverſaries, they might be inſtructed how they ſhould defend themſelves afterwards againſt the like Objections. One inſtance whereof we have in the Text, I have now choſen to ſpeak to; *Then came to Jeſus Scribes and Phariſes, which were of Jeruſalem*, &c.

As to which words, I ſhall not need to ſay much concerning the Perſons, that our Saviour had to deal withal, becauſe their Character is ſo well known to all, that diligently read the Goſpels. The Scribes were the Men that profeſſed to teach the Law, and expected to have all their Interpretations received as Oracles. The Phariſes were the moſt ſubtle and prevailing Sect amongſt the Scribes; for though as things were in that Age, and for ſome time before, the Scribes generally agreed in corrupting the Law, and deceiving the People, yet they had their Parties and Factions among themſelves, the Phariſes in our Saviour's time being a Sect

a Sect of the greateſt power in the Council, and of the greateſt Reputation with the People, and whereas it is ſaid, that they were the Scribes and Phariſes, or the Scribes of the Phariſaical Party, which were of *Jeruſalem*, that came to Jeſus; the meaning is, that they were ſuch as kept their Schools in the City of *Jeruſalem*, and were therefore of the firſt rank amongſt the Phariſes. And now I ſhall diſcourſe to you of theſe two things:

Firſt, Of the Objection which theſe Men made againſt Jeſus and his Diſciples.
Secondly, Of the Anſwer which our Saviour made to the Charge that was laid againſt them.

I. Of the Objection, which theſe Men made againſt Jeſus and his Diſciples: *Why do thy Diſciples tranſgreſs the Tradition of the Elders? for they waſh not their hands when they eat bread.* A Charge laid with as much confidence as anger, and therefore they ſcorned to put any of his Diſciples to anſwer it, and thought fit to challenge the Maſter himſelf about it. Now the firſt thing that is proper to be conſidered here, is,

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1. The nature of the Charge, which ſeems to be a general one illuſtrated by one particular inſtance: The general Charge was, that the Diſciples of Jeſus *tranſgreſſed the Tradition of the Elders*: The particular inſtance was, that they tranſgreſſed ſuch Tradition, in *not waſhing their hands before meat.*

As to the general Charge, they had *tranſgreſſed the Tradition of the Elders.* But what was the Tradition of the Elders? The Tradition of the Elders, was the Doctrine that had been delivered, and the Rules that had been laid down by wiſe and great Men, and univerſally received in former Ages. One would think therefore, that the Laws of *Moſes*, and the Rules of the *Prophets*, and whatſoever was commanded in the Scriptures, had been the *Tradition of the Elders*, for all theſe things had been delivered down by an uncontroulable Tradition from hand to hand, for near two thouſand years. But there was no ſuch meaning under theſe words, as they uſed them. By *the Tradition of the Elders*, or by the ancient Tradition of wiſe and great Men, they meant no Doctrines or Rules for Faith or Practice, that were expreſſed in the Writings of *Moſes* and the Prophets, but

but ſuch Doctrines as not being written in the Law, were delivered down by word of Mouth, and by conſtant uſage from Father to Son, and ſo from one Age to another. And thus *Joſephus* tells us, *Antiq.* 13. 13. That the firſt and main Principle of the Phariſes was, that they denyed all thoſe things to be written, which concerned Religion. The Fundamental Rule of their Sect was this, that there was a double Law, an *Oral* Law, and a *Written* Law: A Law delivered from Age to Age by word of Mouth, as well as a Law delivered in ſuch Books, as had Authority from *Moſes* and the Prophets. To gain reverence to theſe Traditions, they perſwaded the People, that though they were not written in the Law, yet they were delivered to *Moſes* by God himſelf, to *Joſhua* by *Moſes*, to the Prophets by *Joſhua*, to *Eſdras* by the Prophets, and thence to the Maſters of the Schools, of whom they were the Succeſſors: And they being the Guardians of theſe unwritten Traditions, which were to be had in equal, or rather ſuperior regard to that which the Scriptures were to be held in, claimed alſo an abſolute Obedience from the People, inſomuch, that it was a ſaying amongſt them: If the

the Scribes ſay, *that the right hand is the left, or the left hand the right*, you are to believe them. Now the Charge of the Phariſes upon our Saviour's Diſciples, was not, that they had tranſgreſſed any Tradition that appeared to have a Divine Original, by the Books of *Moſes* and the Prophets, but that they had *tranſgreſſed the Tradition of the Elders*, as they uſed to call them, ſuch Traditions for which they had no other pretence, than that they were conveyed down by word of mouth from Father to Son, amongſt the wiſe Men, and the Maſters, and the Scribes.

The particular inſtance to explain the general Charge was this, that the Diſciples did *not waſh their hands, before they eat bread.* For one of thoſe many Traditionary Doctrines, for which they were ſo zealous, was this, that if a Stranger, or an uncircumciſed Perſon ſhould but touch a *Jew*, the *Jew* was forthwith defiled, or if he had but touched any thing, that a *Jew* afterward touched, he was unclean; and if the *Jew* ſhould in that ſtate take any Meat to eat, that Meat was rendred unclean, and would defile his mind; for the preventing of which danger, it was a part of Religion to waſh before

before eating; and thus for an idle fancy they invented an idle relief, and placed ſo much Religion in it, that ſays one of them, *He that eats bread with unwaſhen hands, ſins as much as if he had lain with a Whore:* And ſays another, *It is the higheſt point of holineſs for a man to ſeparate himſelf from the vulgar*, and that he doth not touch them, nor ſo much as eat or drink with them; and the next to this, is to waſh away the impurity that is contracted thereby: You may ſee a more particular account of this ſenceleſs Superſtition of theirs, in *Mark* 7. *The Phariſes, and all the Jews, except they waſh their hands oft, eat not, holding the Tradition of the Elders. And when they come from the market, except they waſh, they eat not: And many other things there be, which they have received to hold, as the waſhing of cups, and pots, brazen veſſels, and of tables:* that is, they did not only waſh their own hands, leaſt they ſhould have touched ſome ſtranger, or one leſs pure than themſelves, but leaſt ſome ſtranger ſhould have touched the Cup, in which they drank, or the Diſh in which their Meat was, or the Tables upon which the Cups were to ſtand; theſe were waſhed with all care, not for cleanlineſs,

lineſs, for that would not ſerve the turn; but for holineſs-ſake, as if their Minds were made pure, by waſhing their Hands and Cups, and all things of this ſort. This was one kind of their Traditionary Doctrines, for tranſgreſſing of which the Diſciples of Jeſus were accuſed by the Phariſes.

II. We may obſerve theſe two things implyed in the Charge:

1. The concern which the Scribes had for their Traditions. And,

2. The reverence in which the People held them.

1. The concern of the Scribes and Phariſes to have them obſerved: It was ſo great, that a Man might with leſs danger from them, break a plain Law of God, than tranſgreſs one of their Traditions, and they would ſooner call him to an account for this latter, than for the former; if they could have charged our Lord's Diſciples with breaking the Fifth Commandment, as Jeſus charged them with it preſently after, of this they would have ſaid nothing: But they were not able to bear the neglect of the Diſciples to waſh before eating, for Conſcience-ſake: And when he had given the Multitude a plain account of this neglect,

lect, neither could they bear that, but were offended at him, *v.* 12. Hence in their *Talmud*, a Book that pretends to have gathered up their Oral Traditions, it is ſaid, That there is more in the words of the Scribes, than in the words of the Law: And we are not to think that the written Law is the Foundation, but the unwritten; and the words of the Elders are of more Authority and weight, than the words of the Prophets: So blind was their Zeal for their Traditions, that one of the Rabbies being once caſt into Priſon, and Water being given him to waſh, and to drink, and the greater part of it being ſpilt, he rather choſe to waſh his hands, than to drink, ſaying, *'Tis better to die, than to tranſgreſs the Tradition of the Elders.* And no wonder that they were thus concerned, when it was by theſe Doctrines that they kept up an abſolute Authority over the People; for if the People would be made to believe, that the unwritten Law was of greater conſequence than the written, and that the Scribes were the Guardians and Oracles of the unwritten Law, nothing could be better contrived, to keep them in an abſolute dependance upon the Scribes.

2. The

2. The Charge doth likewiſe imply an univerſal regard of theſe Traditions in the People: *Why do thy diſciples tranſgreſs the traditions?* (*i. e.*) Why do they only do it: And we heard from St. *Mark*, that *the Phariſees, and all the Jews, except they waſh their hands oft, eat not*: Whatever became of the Commandments of God, here was very good care taken, that the Traditions of the Church ſhould be kept. Nay, it was ſo fixed in the minds of our Lord's Diſciples themſelves, that they were to be kept, that it was not eaſie to ſet them right in theſe things preſently; for after our Saviour had told them, *Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth the man, but that which cometh out of the mouth*, v. 11. *Peter* asked him, *v.* 15. to declare the meaning of the Parable, or as he thought it, hard ſaying: And Jeſus ſaid, *v.* 16. *Are ye alſo yet without underſtanding?* And ſo he goes on, ſhewing that he ſpake of cleanneſs of mind, which was defiled by *evil thoughts, murders, adulteries*, &c. They had not yet got rid of thoſe Superſtitious Fancies that reigned amongſt the People, and were ſo prejudiced by them, that they could hardly underſtand the plain truth on the other ſide. Nay, when

when after this, he had occaſion to ſay to them, as you find in the next Chapter, *ver. 6. Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Phariſes, and of the Sadducees:* How do we think they underſtood this ſaying? *And they reaſoned among themſelves, ſaying, it is becauſe we have taken no bread.* Which ſhewed, they were not yet cured of this Phariſaical Superſtition; inaſmuch as they underſtood our Saviour, as if he had forbidden them to eat any bread which the Phariſes had touched, as the Phariſes would eat nothing that had been touched by a Gentile; when all that our Saviour meant, was, that they ſhould *beware of their Doctrine.* And no wonder that theſe Traditionary Inventions had taken ſuch root in the minds of men, when they did not ſerve more for the Authority of the Guides, than for the eaſe and liberty of the People that followed them: For though it was ſomething a nice and elaborate buſineſs to obſerve all the Traditions, yet this was much more grateful, not only to fancy, but to fleſh and blood, than to obſerve the Rules of true Piety, by keeping the Commandments of God: For inſtance, though it was ſomething troubleſome to be waſhing at

every turn, yet if this would keep a man's mind clean, it was a much eaſier care, than to keep the *heart pure*, v. 19. from *evil thoughts*, *murders*, *adulteries*, *fornications*, *thefts*, *falſe-witneſſings*, *and evil ſpeakings*, which according to our Saviour's Doctrine, were the things *that defile the man*, v. 20. How was it poſſible, but that People ſhould be fond of believing ſuch a concluſion as this, whoſoever lives in the Land of *Iſrael*, and eateth his Meat in cleanneſs, and ſpeaks in the Holy Tongue, and Morning and Evening ſays over his *Phylacteries*, let him never doubt, but he ſhall obtain Life in the World to come. This was the Doctrine of the Maſters, and certainly they muſt be very unreaſonable People, that could not be content to go to Heaven upon ſuch terms as theſe, if they could be made ſuch Fools as to believe it: And truly Men are very apt to hearken to ſuch Follies, becauſe they ſave them the labour of being truly good. No wonder therefore that the Scribes were ſo univerſally believed and obeyed by the People, inaſmuch as they undertook to carry them all to Heaven infallibly, by ſuch ſlight and cheap performances, as were required by their Tradition:

dition: And in ſuch a caſe as this, it would coſt more than ordinary pains to undeceive them; our Saviour himſelf being conſtrained to repeat his Inſtructions over and over again to his Diſciples, to get theſe Fancies out of their heads. And thus much concerning the nature of that Charge, which the Phariſes laid againſt our Lord's Diſciples, and concerning that which is implyed in it, the zeal of the Prieſts, and the Scribes for their Traditions, and the fondneſs of the People that were addicted to them. I proceed now to the

2. Point: And that is the Anſwer which our Saviour made to this Charge, *viz. Why do ye alſo tranſgreſs the Commandment of God by your Tradition?* Which doth of itſelf appear to be a plain and wiſe way of anſwering their bold Queſtion, becauſe it turned the difficulty upon them, and that a thouſand times a greater difficulty, to ſay, if they could, by what Authority they advanced their Traditions againſt the Law of God, and ſince they thought it was ſo heinous a fault in the Diſciples, *not to obſerve* their Traditions, to purge themſelves if they were able, of a notorious fault in *keeping* their Traditions, and teaching

them to others; inaſmuch as their Traditions could not be kept without tranſgreſſing the commandment of God. Which general Charge our Saviour makes good alſo, by one particular inference ſo plain, that there was no fencing againſt it: *For God*, ſays he, *commanded, ſaying, Honour thy Father and thy Mother: and he that curſeth Father or Mother, let him die the death: But ye ſay, whoſoever ſhall ſay to his Father, or his Mother, it is a gift, by whatſoever thou mighteſt be profited by me, and honour not his Father and his Mother, he ſhall be free: thus have you made the Commandment of God of none effect, by your Tradition.* The Tradition was this, that if a man had vowed never to relieve, or to give any thing to ſuch or ſuch a Perſon, though it were his Father or his Mother, he was held by his Vow, and if afterwards he ſhould change his mind, and be willing to relieve his Parents, and in order thereunto, go to the Prieſts to be diſpenſed with, and abſolved of his Vow, the Prieſts ſhould challenge all that he now deſigned to relieve his Parents withal, but of his Vow he could not be releaſed, and the Money was put into the Treaſury of the Temple; ſo

that

that if his Father or Mother came afterwards to him, and asked an Alms of him, he might ſay, *It is Corban*, or devoted to the Service of the Temple, whatſoever I can have a mind to give thee; and in St. *Mark* our Saviour concludes, *And ye ſuffer him no more to do ought for his Father, or his Mother:* For they held him to his Vow, and whatever Money he could be willing to give them afterwards, being under the Religion of a Vow, it became Sacred, and was to go to the Temple: In which moſt wicked Tradition they had their Ends; for the Wealth of the Treaſury being partly employed in the Reparation of the Temple, partly for the Relief of the Poor, partly for the enriching of the Prieſts and Levites, the Phariſes who were no ſmall part of the Prieſts, had their ſhare in all, that was brought into the Treaſury. By this Traditionary Doctrine and Practice, they had eluded a Law of God not of leſſer moment, but of great moment, that the tranſgreſſion of it was capital, and ſuch a Law too, as the light of Nature ſhews no leſs, than the written word of God; and therefore well might our Saviour conclude, Thus have ye made the Com-

mandment of God of none effect by your Tradition: But if it be now asked, why our Saviour did not keep to that inſtance which the Phariſes produced, and anſwer to that, but rather choſe another inſtance? The account of this I think very eaſie, *viz.* That he ſaw it was neceſſary to run them down by one of the moſt undeniable inſtances that could be imagined, of their contradicting the Law of God by their Traditions; for the boldneſs of the Phariſes and Prieſts was ſo exceſſive, and the fondneſs of the People about theſe Traditions was ſo hard to be broken, that it was neceſſary to make way for their conviction by ſuch an argument, as muſt needs make ſome impreſſion upon them: And when he had made an end of that, he did not forget to ſpeak directly to the point they had begun withal; for *ver.* 10. we find that he called the multitude, and ſaid unto them, *Hear and underſtand*, not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a Man, but that which cometh out of the Mouth defileth a Man; that is, do not ſuffer your ſelves to be deluded by theſe confident Men, who uſe their Authority to that degree, as to carry you under a pretence of

of keeping their Traditions, to the tranſgreſſion of the plaineſt Commandments of God, as I have evidently ſhewn in the caſe of the Fifth Commandment; and now be willing to be inſtructed in that other point of pretended Tradition, which they blame my Diſciples for not obſerving, and know that no Food whatſoever is unclean, or unlawful in its own nature to be uſed, nor can any Man's touch make it ſo, nor can any of theſe things defile a Man's Conſcience; but a Man's Conſcience is defiled by that which *comes from his heart*, by evil thoughts, by evil words, and by actions contrary to the Command of God, ſuch as *murders, and adulteries*, &c. *Theſe are the things that defile a man, but to eat with unwaſhen hands, defileth not a man:* (*i. e.*) doth not by any means affect his Soul, or his Conſcience, for in this reſpect he is neither better for waſhing, nor worſe for letting it alone; and to think otherwiſe is a Superſtition hurtful to your ſelves, and diſhonourable to God, and of very bad conſequence, though it be not ſo impudent and notorious an abuſe, as the making void of God's Law, by the other leud Tradition that I mentioned before: It

is to this purpoſe that we are to underſtand the method and deſign of our Saviour's Diſcourſe in this place, in anſwer to the Objection of the Phariſes brought againſt the Diſciples.

From which anſwer there are ſome things to be gathered well worth our obſervation.

1. That it is ſufficient to overthrow the Authority of a pretended Tradition, that it is contrary to the Commandment of God.

2. That if there be one Traditionary Doctrine, that notoriouſly contradicts the Law of God, that one inſtance is ſufficient to overturn the credit of that Tradition, which pretends to deliver unwritten Doctrines, of equal Authority with thoſe that are written.

3. That the univerſal conſent of ſome one Age or more, that ſuch and ſuch Doctrines were delivered by word of mouth many Ages before, is no argument that they were ſo delivered.

4. That we have a great reaſon to ſtick to the word of God delivered to us in the Scriptures; and to examine all Doctrines and Rules which are ſaid to be neceſſary to Salvation, by that Rule, and to reject the Authority of unwritten Traditions.

1. That

1. That it is ſufficient to overthrow the Authority of a pretended Tradition, that it is contrary to the Commandment of God: For if when Tradition is pretended for any Doctrine or Practice, it be not enough to ſhew, that the ſame Doctrine or Practice is inconſiſtent with what is plainly required in the Scriptures, which are acknowledged by all to contain the word of God; I ſay, if this be not enough, then our Saviour uſed an inſufficient Argument againſt the pretended Tradition of not ſuffering the Son that was under a Vow of the contrary, to relieve his Father or Mother, that it made void the Commandment of God. But doubtleſs our Saviour was ſo far from uſing a bad Argument, that he uſed the beſt and moſt convincing of all: And truly if we did not in this caſe conſider our Saviour's Authority, yet it muſt be a monſtrous prejudice, that keeps any Man from diſcerning the ſtrength of this Argument, againſt the Authority of any unwritten Doctrine, that it is contrary to what is written; for nothing is more certain, than that Contradictions cannot be true, and yet they muſt be true, if that Doctrine for which unwritten Tradition is pre-

pretended, can be *of God*, though it contradicts the written Tradition, which is by all acknowledged to be Divine. But as plain as this argument is, yet it is very well for us that we find our bleſſed Saviour giving ſuch Authority to it; becauſe there are Chriſtians in the World, bearing up themſelves upon the Tradition of the Church, that are loth to admit this Argument; which we have no cauſe to be amazed at, becauſe it is an utter Confutation of all their pretences. We charge them with having brought into the Church new Articles of Faith, and new Doctrines of Worſhip, which are not only very different from what was taught at firſt by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, but ſome of them contrary thereunto, as we can ſhew them out of the Scriptures. But this way of proceeding doth by no means content them, and they inſiſt upon it, that the Cauſe may be tryed otherwiſe. For ſay they, You acknowledge that our Church was once a pure Church, and taught the Goſpel ſincerely; but if, as you ſay, ſhe departed from the pure Faith and Worſhip which the Apoſtles left, it is impoſſible but this muſt have been very

very notorious, becauſe it could not have been done without oppoſition and reſiſtance from ſome that muſt needs obſerve it: Tell us therefore, when were theſe new and falſe Doctrines introduced? Who were the Men that brought them in? Who were the firſt that made the diſcovery? What Council condemned them, after they were diſcovered? For if none of theſe things can be ſhewn, it is abſurd to think, that any ſuch alteration ſhould have been, as you ſay. Which reaſoning amounts to thus much, that it is impoſſible we can be ſure that in the compaſs of a thouſand Years, there was a great alteration happened in the ſtate of Religion, unleſs withal we can tell how it came about, and juſt when it came about, the preciſe time, and the punctual manner and circumſtances thereof, which is juſt as if a Man almoſt deſperately ſick of a Diſeaſe, that had been for ſome Years growing upon him, ſhould prove to his Friend, that he is as well as ever he was in his Life; for ſays he, You know I was well once, and if I am now ſo ill, as you ſay, pray ſhew me the time when this Diſeaſe firſt happened,

pened, the manner how, and what Phyſitians were called about me; which kind of arguing would certainly prove no more, than that the Diſeaſe had taken his head. When the Servants came and told their Lord, that the *tares came up with the wheat*, it was excuſable in them to ſay, *We ſowed good ſeed, whence hath it theſe tares?* But when their Maſter told them, *An enemy hath done this*, if they had diſputed, and told him, It was impoſſible there ſhould be any Tares at all, becauſe he could not tell punctually that very Night when they were ſown, and who the Perſons were, that took the malicious pains to ſow them; then they had been very inexcuſable thus to renounce their own certain knowledge, for the ſake of a vain Speculation. Now we are very ſure that the Apoſtles did at firſt ſow nothing in the Church, but good and true Doctrine: Our Fathers that lived about fourteen hundred Years after, found quite another ſort of Doctrine gotten into the Church, and ſome of them contrary to what the Apoſtles taught, as the Scriptures manifeſtly ſhew; and yet there have been a long time, and ſtill there are certain Diſputers

ters, that go about to ſtagger others, with ſuch like queſtions as we have been ſpeaking of, and teach them to defie all reaſoning out of the Scriptures, till theſe queſtions are ſatisfied; What Age, What Year of our Lord, were theſe Errors brought into the Church? Who were they that brought them in, and who firſt complained of them? Now although a very reaſonable account both may be, and hath been given of the Perſons, the Time, and the Manner, and the Degrees, by which ſuch Corruptions got into the Church, yet it is very unreaſonable to expect that every Chriſtian ſhould be able to anſwer theſe Queſtions punctually, becauſe it requires more Labour and Reading, than generally they have either leiſure or ability to go through with; but withal it is very needleſs, becauſe there is a ſhorter and a ſurer way to determine this matter, and that by comparing thoſe Doctrines and Practices with the Scriptures: For the Scriptures have a more certain Tradition, than any of thoſe Hiſtories that give an account of the Revolutions of Church Affairs ſince the beginning; and now what matter is it, if I am aſſured that ſuch

ſuch and ſuch Corruptions were brought into the Church, ſometime or other after the Apoſtles, becauſe they are contrary to what the Apoſtles taught and left in their Writings, though I cannot tell juſt the Year when, or the Perſon by whom they firſt crept into the Church. I would very fain know of any Man, that when our Saviour ſet himſelf to overthrow that wicked Tradition, which we were ſpeaking of before, whether he could not, if he had pleaſed, have given an exact account of the Perſons that began it in the *Jewiſh* Church, and of the time when it began, and of every circumſtance that attended its entrance into the World, and its growth and encreaſe afterwards. But did he go this way to work? It is certain that the Phariſees pretended the Traditions which they taught the People, were delivered from God to *Moſes*, and that through ſeveral Ages they were conveyed down to them ſucceſſively by word of mouth. And I grant that if our Lord had with many words ſhewn them, that they were ſuch and ſuch men who firſt brought them in, this had been a confutation of their pretence; but for all that, he

was

was pleaſed to uſe a better and a ſhorter argument againſt them, and told them what the commandment was in the Law, which their pretended Tradition made void, and this was inſtead of a thouſand arguments, that their Doctrine never came from *Moſes*, but was invented ſome time afterwards: And I beſeech you let none of us be aſhamed to uſe that kind of argument, which our Saviour thought fit to confute thoſe People withal, and which we have reaſon to think he uſed, that he might ſhew us the beſt way to ſecure our ſelves from being impoſed upon by unwritten Traditions, and by a pretence of having received ſuch Doctrines from the Apoſtles, as they never delivered. When therefore we are asked, If *Tranſubſtantiation* be an Error, and not an Article of Faith, when did it come in? If *Service in an Unknown Tongue* be an Innocation, when did it come in? If the *Sacrifice of the Maſs* be a Corruption, when did it come in? Let us account it ſufficient to anſwer, for ſo our Saviour thought it in the like caſe, That *Tranſubſtantiation* makes *void* thoſe places of Scripture, which expreſly affirm, that by eating

eating of *Bread* we *ſhew forth* the Death of Chriſt, and are made partakers of his Body: That *Service in an Unknown Tongue* makes void the Fourteenth Chapter of the Firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians*: And that the *Sacrifice of the Maſs* makes void the Seventh and the Tenth Chapters of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews*, which expreſly tell us, that Chriſt can be offered no more, and that *there remains no more Sacrifice for Sins*; and therefore we are very well aſſured, that they did come in ſometime or other, ſince the Apoſtles, but whether they came in ſooner or later, is nothing to the purpoſe, for certainly nothing ought ever to have come in, that makes void any part of the Word of God; but if any ſuch thing hath got in, there is all the reaſon in the World that it ſhould be thrown out again. They may well be aſhamed, that cannot bear this ſort of arguing, but moſt certainly we have no reaſon to be aſhamed to uſe it, ſince our bleſſed Saviour hath uſed it before us; for when he ſet himſelf to overthrow the credit of theſe Doctrines, for which they pretended a conſtant Tradition in the Church, he thought it ſufficient for his

his purpoſe, to ſhew, that they voided the Commandments of God, and *made his word of none effect.*

2. If there be one Traditionary Doctrine that notoriouſly contradicts the written Word of God, 'tis enough to overthrow the whole Credit of that Tradition which pretends to bring down unwritten Doctrines, that are neceſſary to be received. For thus we find, that our Saviour by the ſingle inſtance of that Tradition, which voided the Fifth Commandment, overthrew the Objection of the Phariſes againſt his Diſciples: *Why do thy Diſciples tranſgreſs the Tradition of the Elders?* (*i. e.*) their unwritten Traditions: which was as much as to ſay, that they ought all of them to be Religiouſly obſerved, becauſe they had all the ſame Authority: Our Saviour therefore produces an inſtance of their Traditions, that takes away all Authority, inaſmuch as it was a plain contradiction to the Law of God; if therefore amongſt their unwritten Doctrines and Rules, there were any that had ſome kind of goodneſs and uſefulneſs, they were to be regarded upon their own account, and not upon the Authority of Tradition. But

when he had utterly overthrown all that pretended Authority by an undeniable argument, he then ſpeaks to the caſe, which themſelves had propounded, and lays down the truth concerning it. They had a vaſt number of Superſtitions, for which they pretended Tradition, and they tax our Saviour's Diſciples for not obſerving one of them. Now he with admirable wiſdom firſt breaks the Authority of their Tradition, ſhewing that one of them was plainly againſt the Law of God, and then he ſhews how ſuperſtitious and fooliſh they were in the caſe which themſelves choſe to ſpeak to. In this alſo our Lord hath ſet us an example, that if we are preſt by a pretence to Tradition in favour of unwritten Doctrines and Articles, we ſhould in the firſt place ſhew that one or more of theſe is contrary to the Word of God; and therefore that there is no reaſon to pretend Tradition for any of them, ſince they are all ſaid to have come down together: Which being done in the firſt place, it will be then ſeaſonable to ſhew, what is to be thought of the reſt, if they are judged of by the general Rules of Reaſon and Scripture.

3. The

3. The Univerſal conſent of ſome one or two Ages, that ſuch and ſuch Doctrines were delivered by word of mouth many Ages before, is no argument that they were ſo delivered. The Phariſes did pretend that their Doctrines and Interpretations of the Law had been conveyed down from *Moſes* by Oral Tradition to that Age in which they lived, and there were ſeveral of theſe Traditions univerſally believed in that Age to have been ſo conveyed, and the Practice of the People was univerſally governed by them: For inſtance, that of Religious *Waſhing before Meat*, and the *waſhing of Cups and Pots*, as a thing in it ſelf good and holy, was univerſally received and practiſed, as St. *Mark* tells us. Now I would fain know whether they might not have reaſoned in this faſhion: We in this Age received this Doctrine and Rule from our Forefathers, who profeſſed they received it from theirs, and if they had not received it from theirs, then they all agreed together to cheat us, as their Forefathers agreed to cheat them, if they had not received it from theirs, and ſo this Tradition muſt have come originally from *Moſes*,

or elſe there was one Age that agreed to cheat the next in things concerning the Service of God, and the Salvation of Mens Souls. But after all the prettineſs of this demonſtration, I think, we have more reaſon to believe, that this Superſtition never came from *Moſes*, becauſe our Saviour expoſed it as a vain and fooliſh Doctrine, than to believe that it did, becauſe the *Jews* ever ſince the Phariſes time, who were a Sect of full three hundred years ſtanding were taught to pretend Tradition for the Innovations of the Phariſes, and for this amongſt the reſt. And therefore it is a vain thing to pretend, that becauſe ſuch and ſuch Traditionary Doctrines were in ſuch an Age taught without controul, as neceſſary to Salvation, they muſt needs have been taught ſo from the very firſt.

4. That we have great reaſon to ſtick to the word of God delivered to us in the Holy Scriptures, and to examine all Doctrines and Pretences by this Rule. For the Holy Scriptures are indeed the Rule whereby we are to try that pretence, that there is another Rule, *viz.* of unwritten Tradition; and if that other pretended Rule doth in any

any thing contradict the Scriptures, moſt certainly it is but a pretended Rule, and to be rejected. To deal plainly, this ſame Oral Tradition was never pretended for any good, either by Jews or Chriſtians; nor made uſe of but to advance and protect ſome Doctrines or Practices, that ſtand condemn'd by the Scriptures: And therefore after ſo long experience had of the miſchief, as well as vanity of this pretence, it were perhaps not unreaſonable for any Chriſtian to reject the Argument of unwritten Tradition without any more ado, and to entertain no Doctrine or Practice neceſſary to Salvation, which cannot be proved out of the Scriptures, nor to entertain any thing at all, that is contrary thereunto, let Men talk of Tradition, or any other Authority, as long as they pleaſe.

And now I queſtion not, but this Diſcourſe will be acknowledged to be very plain and convincing; but for all that, it is not certain, that the Argument of it ſelf will ſecure us from being deceived by the Sophiſtry of others, if we do not take heed to the main thing of all, and that is, to lead ſuch Lives as the Scriptures direct us to

lead, for there is no ſuch temptation in the world to be fond of Traditionary Doctrines, as to live in that manner, that if the Traditionary Doctrines be not true, we can have no hope of Salvation. If we will live according to the Scriptures, we ſhall have no temptation, and I am ſure we have no reaſon to believe otherwiſe, than according to the Scriptures: Let us often think that *here we have no continuing place*, we muſt not always live here, but that in a very little time, we are to go into another World, and to appear before our Judge: Let us remember, that this is the great argument, by which the Scriptures engage us to live a *ſober, righteous and godly life*, and let us conſider that it is the ſtrongeſt Argument in the World, and be perſwaded by it to do accordingly, and this will above all things eſtabliſh us in the Truth. It is ſomething hard to keep that man from being deceived, who needs the comfort of falſe Principles: For Men are very apt to be running for comfort, where it is to be had, though they cheat themſelves for it.

Bre-

Brethren, the Holy Scriptures are God's Book, and they are acknowledged to be ſo, by all Chriſtians in the World, therefore I ſay it again and again, ſtick to the Scriptures, live according to the Scriptures, and believe according to the Scriptures: Make the Scriptures the Rule of your Practice, and then you will need no more arguments to make them the Rule of your Faith: *And as many, as walk according to this Rule, Peace* will *be upon them.*

The Eighth Sermon.

1 COR. XI. 19.

For there must be Hereſies alſo amongſt you, that they which are approved may be made manifeſt among you.

THE word *Hereſie* did at firſt indifferently ſignifie any party diſtinguiſhed from others by Opinions and Practices peculiar to it ſelf, whether thoſe Opinions were true or falſe, thoſe Practices good or bad; inſomuch that Chriſtianity it ſelf was called a *Sect* or *Hereſie* for ſome time. But in time it came to be uſed in the worſer ſenſe, and was reſtrained to thoſe, that diſtinguiſhed themſelves by the profeſſion of falſe Doctrines, or by unjuſtifiable Practices: Which uſe of the word began ſoon after Chriſtianity, as far as I can find; and there was this reaſon for it, that Chriſtianity having eſtabliſhed one *Form of Doctrine*,

Doctrine, which was to be univerſally received, there were now to be no Hereſies or Sects, that is, no departure from the Unity of that Doctrine; and every new Sect from that time forward muſt neceſſarily be in the wrong: Thus alſo the word *Schiſm* or Diviſion came in a little time to be reſtrained to that ſide or party, by whoſe fault the breach of Chriſtian Communion and Concord was made; and although, when a diſſention, and breach of Unity happens, they that are not in the fault are at the ſame diſtance from thoſe that are, that the faulty are from the innocent, yet the faulty were only ſaid to be in *Schiſm* or Diviſion: Moreover, it ſeems that *Hereſie* and *Schiſm* were words at firſt uſed indifferently to ſignifie the ſame fault of diſcord and contention, becauſe breach of Charity and Communion, was for the moſt part made by departing from Unity of Doctrine, though in proceſs of time, Hereſie was reſtrained to ſignifie an Error about the Faith, and Schiſm a breach of Order, and Chriſtian Communion. St. *Paul* doth in this place ſeem to mean the ſame thing by both words, for in the foregoing verſe, ſays he, *I hear that there be Diviſions* or

Schiſms

Schiſms *among you, and I partly believe it*; that is, I believe it of ſome of you. And there he adds, *For there muſt be alſo Hereſies among you*; that is, Sects and Parties diſtinguiſhed from one another by their peculiar Doctrines and Practices.

The matter about which there was a diſagreement in the Church of *Corinth*, was no leſs, than that of the Adminiſtration of the Holy Communion, that having happened ſo early, which in the latter Ages of the Church has obtained in a much higher degree, that the Sacrament of the Lord's Supper, which was in great part inſtituted to unite the Faithful in one Body, was perverted into an occaſion of dividing them from one another: Upon which obſervation St. *Paul* inſerted this memorable ſaying:

There muſt be alſo Hereſies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifeſt.

There muſt be *Hereſies*, (*i. e.*) Parties that will contend for falſe Doctrines and unlawful Practices, that will either take away from the Faith, or add to the Faith, that will either diſpenſe with the Commandments of God,

or

or *teach for doctrines the commandments of men.*

There must be Hereſies *among you*; that is, this muſt happen in the Church it ſelf: *Men ſhould* ariſe *from among themſelves ſpeaking perverſe things*: And thus alſo St. *Peter* foretold, *There ſhall be falſe teachers among you, who privily ſhall bring in damnable hereſies*, 2 Pet. 2. 1. But it was impoſſible they ſhould do it privily or ſlily, if they were not of the Church, and had not thereby an opportunity, under a pretence of Piety, and care of Chriſtian Truth, to ſlip their Innovations into the Church by degrees. Whereas it is added, *That they which are approved may be made manifeſt*; the meaning is, that honeſt men may more and more appear to be what they are.

So that in the words of the Text, there are theſe two things obſervable.

I. The unavoidableneſs of Hereſies in the Church, *There muſt be Hereſies among you.*

II. The reaſon why God is pleaſed to permit Hereſies, *that they who are approved may be made manifeſt.*

1. The

1. The unavoidableneſs of Hereſies in the Church, *There muſt be Hereſies among you.* By which we are not to underſtand an abſolute neceſſity, that Hereſies ſhould ariſe: For this is inconſiſtent with that liberty of humane Nature, which Religion, and God's dealing with Mankind in giving us Laws, and making us to expect a Day of Judgment, do neceſſarily ſuppoſe: But the meaning is this, that all things conſidered, it was in it ſelf highly probable that Hereſies would be brought into the Church, and that God certainly foreſaw that they would come in, men being left to that liberty, which is capable of being abuſed, and under that Grace that may be reſiſted. All therefore, that is needful to be conſidered under this head, will be this, what are the grounds of that probability of the coming in of Hereſies, which the Text ſuppoſes, of Hereſies (I ſay) which God ſaw would certainly come to paſs, if he interpoſed not his irreſiſtible power to prevent it.

Now it was not to be expected, but that Hereſies would be, if we conſider on the one ſide the revelation of Chriſtian Truth, and on the other, the Temper

Temper and Circumſtances of Mankind.

1. As to the Revelation of Chriſtian Truth, we are to conſider the tendency and deſign of the Doctrine it ſelf, and the evidence we have that God hath revealed it.

1. The ſpirit and deſign of the Doctrine of Chriſtianity, which is plainly to rectifie the ill Manners, and the corrupt Affections of Mankind, to reſtrain them from Liberties, which moſt Men deſire, how unreaſonable and hurtful ſoever they are, and to tie them up to Rules, that are not grateful to fleſh and bloud. Moreover, the Doctrine of Chriſtianity truly repreſented, is equally for the Intereſt of all Mankind, and is by no means framed to ſerve the deſigns of Ambition, and to advance one part of the Church, to the prejudice and ſlavery of all the reſt. Laſtly, It teaches a Worſhip of great ſimplicity, that has but very few Myſteries, and nothing of that Pomp and Ceremony, which is ſo pleaſing to the Senſes and the Fancies of Men, and will not ſuffer them to place the weight of Religion in any outward Shows and Performances, but *in loving the Lord our God with*

with all our heart; and our neighbours as our ſelves: And to ſuch a courſe of life and temper of mind it obligeth us by all that it teaches concerning God and Chriſt, and a life to come, our Creed ſerving no other turn, but to make it neceſſary for us to live *a ſober, righteous, and godly life.* But then

2. The evidence we have for the truth of this Doctrine, and that God hath revealed it, is not ſo irreſiſtible, as to over-rule all contradiction and perverſeneſs, though it be ſufficient to ſatisfie a wiſe and honeſt Man; nor is the manner wherein theſe things are teſtified and declared to us, ſo inlightning, as to make it abſolutely impoſſible for a Man to miſtake about them, or for thoſe that wilfully pervert them, to delude others with putting falſe colours upon them; although it is ſo plain, that we muſt be extraordinarily to blame, if we run into any Error againſt ſound Faith or good Life. One would think the Doctrine of the Reſurrection had been plainly enough delivered, firſt by our Saviour, then by his Apoſtles, and that the Inſtitution of the Lord's Supper, and the Order which the Apoſtles obſerved

ſerved in the Adminiſtration of it was alſo plain enough, and yet in this very Church of *Corinth*, there were divers fouly miſtaken as to the one, and ſtill wanted inſtruction as to the other. One would think that theſe words, *This is my body*, were ſufficiently plain, and that there was not the leaſt need for our Lord to have added preſently after that ſaying, *But take notice that I mean, This is my body by deputation or repreſentation, or in a figurative ſenſe*, any more then to have ſo explained himſelf, when he ſaid, *I am the door, I am the vine*, &c. But yet becauſe he did not think fit to leave an expreſs caution againſt the literal ſenſe of theſe words, we know it has been inſiſted upon againſt plain evidence of Scripture, Sence, and Reaſon. Again, let a Man conſider the Inſtitution of the Holy Communion, and have no prejudice upon his mind, and he will never deſire that it ſhould have been more plainly expreſſed, that the Cup be adminiſtred to all, than it is, eſpecially ſince it is ſaid of the Cup, *Drink ye All of this*, and *they All drank of it*: But yet becauſe theſe words were not added, or the like, *And let no man ever preſume to adminiſter the Bread*,

Bread without adminiſtring the Cup to the ſame Perſon, the Cup hath been taken away from the People, for the greater reverence of Adminiſtration. When St. *Paul* ſaid, that he that underſtands not the Language in which Prayer, or giving of Thanks is made, is not edified, it could hardly have been thought neceſſary to have added this, *Let therefore all Forms of Publick Prayer and Adminiſtration of Sacraments in all Ages of the Church be made in the Tongue, that the People underſtand:* And yet for want of ſome ſuch concluſion Publick Prayers have been made in a Language, that the People underſtand not, and the Practice maintained as confidently, as if the fourth Chapter of the firſt Epiſtle to the *Corinthians* were itſelf in a Language, that we could not underſtand. There is no queſtion but God could have added ſuch explications and cautions in the Scripture, as would have made it a great deal more difficult and troubleſome to bring in thoſe Errors, than it hath been, and perhaps utterly impoſſible to maintain them amongſt Chriſtians without deſtroying the Bible out of the World: But then by the

ſame reaſon that ſuch cautions had been neceſſary, thouſand times as many more had been neceſſary too: For ſo many Additions by way of caution muſt have been made, as there are ways of eluding, and perverting a Rule; which are ſo many, that to have provided expreſly againſt them all, would have made the Bible a more voluminous Book than any is in the World; not to ſay the moſt odd and uncouth Book that ever was ſeen. For whoever wrote or ſpoke in that manner, as to provide againſt all poſſible ways of being miſtaken, or having his words perverted? According to this rate, a man muſt not expect to make an end of a ſentence in an hour, and when he has done all he can, his explications may be perverted too: And therefore we are not to wonder, if God has not provided expreſs Cautions againſt all poſſible Miſtakes and Abuſes of this nature, but thought good to leave a Rule of Faith, and Manners, and Worſhip, which would be ſufficient to guide all honeſt perſons, and lovers of Truth, though not ſufficient to exclude all Cavil and Abuſe.

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For this reaſon it was, that our Saviour did not pretend, that all who ſaw his Works, and heard his Doctrines muſt neceſſarily believe in him; but he required conſtantly a certain temper of mind, conſiſting of Humility, Sincerity, love of the Truth, and in a word, *A good and honeſt Heart*, in order to a man's being his true Diſciple: Common Senſe and Reaſon was not ſufficient for this purpoſe, but there muſt be alſo a peculiar Probity, or teachable Spirit, a Mind ready to believe all Truth, and to do all Duty: Theſe were the *Sheep* that would *hear his Voice*, and *the Ground* that would *receive his Seed, and bring forth Fruit*: Such were the Men that would *hear, and underſtand, and know of the Doctrine whether it were of God.* But as for others, they would make a ſhift to reject it with ſome colour for ſo doing, or to pervert it, if they once admitted it.

This was the firſt thing to be conſidered, the temper and deſign of the Goſpel, which delivers Truth, that does by no means gratifie the Luſts of Men, or pleaſe their Imaginations, or ſerve the Intereſt of particular perſons, to the

diſadvantage of all others; and then that this Truth was delivered in that way, which though it be apt to inſtruct and convince all honeſt men, yet will not infallibly bear down a ſpirit of Contradiction. Now to this we muſt add,

2. The conſideration of the general temper of mankind, for whoſe ſake the Goſpel was made known, *viz.* that it is very corrupt and exceedingly prone to Sin, and therefore to Error, impatient of true Vertue and Piety, and therefore of true Doctrine; Humane nature does affect a lawleſs Liberty, and cannot well bear to be confined, and it is ſo diſeaſed, that it doth not take it well to be healed; it is therefore no wonder if the Remedy which God hath provided, hath been ſo tampered withal by Men, as to make it ineffectual for that purpoſe, for which he hath ſent it to us; and Doctrines have been taught, which give that liberty that Truth denies: It was not to be expected, but that if the Doctrine of Chriſtianity ſhould not effectually overcome thoſe Luſts that reign in the World, thoſe Luſts would corrupt and pervert that Doctrine, and bring in Here-

Hereſies: Ambition and Covetouſneſs would bring in Hereſies for the eſtabliſhing of a worldly Power and Dominion in the Name of Chriſt; Licentiouſneſs would bring in Hereſies for *making void the Commandments of God:* Pride would bring in Hereſies, though for nothing elſe but a man's ſatisfaction and glory in drawing many people into a Party, and becoming the Head of it; and when they were brought in, the natural inconſtancy and wavering of ſome would carry them away from the Truth, the natural ſtiffneſs and inflexibility of others would detain them in Error; the very deſire and love of Novelty would at firſt help to bring in ſome, and in proceſs of time, the pretence of Antiquity would be every day more and more able to gain others: Finally, the unwillingneſs of moſt men to take pains in the ſearch of Truth, and the greater eaſe of depending upon the abſolute Authority of others would give a farther advantage to Error, which feares nothing more than an Examination, and therefore diſcourages all perſons from giving themſelves ſo needleſs a trouble, ſince they have the word of thoſe for their ſecurity, who

cannot poſſibly miſlead them, conſidering the diſeaſes of Humane Nature, which the Doctrine of Chriſt doth not cure miraculouſly and irreſiſtibly, it could not be expected, but there would be Factions and Hereſies againſt the Truth. If therefore it be thought ſtrange that the Apoſtle ſhould ſay, *There muſt be Hereſies*; Let us conſider, that this is no more than if he had ſaid, after all the care that God hath taken to reſtore mankind, there will be Pride and Ambition, there will be Covetouſneſs and Injuſtice, and the love of this World, there will be Luxury and Licencioſneſs, there will be both Inconſtancy and Stiffneckedneſs, there will be Lazineſs and Slothfulneſs, and Unaptneſs for Inſtruction, and therefore there muſt be Hereſies; for God hath provided no infallible Remedies againſt Sin and Wickedneſs, and as certainly as the Vices of the World would break out in the Church, ſo certainly would Errors get into it by degrees, and uſurp the Name and Authority of Truth. 'Tis true, that God, if he pleaſed could abſolutely have hindred it by his overruling Power: But in this ſaying it is implied, that he would not do ſo, and

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Experience has ſhewn, that he has not done ſo, and we have no reaſon to wonder at it, ſince he is not pleaſed to make all men good by an irreſiſtible Grace; for there was leſs reaſon to expect that he ſhould make all men Orthodox by an irreſiſtible Illumination.

And ſo I come to the ſecond point: Which concerns the reaſon aſſigned why God is pleaſed to permit Hereſies. *That they which are approved may be made manifeſt,* (*i. e.*) that it may moſt evidently appear who are ſincere and honeſt, and who are not ſo; for oppoſition to the Truth, and the ways that are taken to advance Error, do prove what men are at the bottom, and diſtinguiſh between thoſe that would appear all alike, if the ſame Truth were equally profeſſed by all: The great difference that breaks out, is that between the probity of ſome men on the one ſide, and the falſeneſs and hypocriſie of others on the other ſide, which appears in theſe inſtances:

1. In a more diligent ſearch after Truth, which is the effect Hereſies have upon honeſt and godly men, while they give occaſion to Hypocrites to conſider what is moſt for their eaſe, their ſafety,

their advantage in this World; whilſt the ſeveral parties of Chriſtians are each of them eagerly contending for their own ways, men of honeſty and ſincerity find themſelves obliged to examine their own perſuaſions more narrowly, and to compare one thing with another more carefully, ſo that if they apprehend a miſtake in themſelves, they quit it without any more to do, and come to eſtabliſh themſelves in the Truth upon better grounds than they had before, and are better able to lead others into it.

2. By this means alſo the conſtancy of ſincere perſons in the profeſſion of the Truth is manifeſted: For where there is no oppoſition, there can be no trial of that Love to the Truth, which will not ſuffer a man to forſake it; and this not only becauſe a man's ſtedfaſtneſs cannot be proved, but by oppoſition and temptation, but likewiſe becauſe they are but few good men in compariſon, who would be at the pains of a diligent Examination of their own perſuaſions, if contrary Doctrines were not advanced, they would rely moſtly upon the Conſent and Authority of others, inſtead of believing Truth upon its proper Grounds and

and Arguments; but if, as I ſaid in the firſt inſtance, the ſpreading of Hereſies puts them upon a diligent ſearch after the reaſons of Truth, their ſtedfaſtneſs in it afterwards is manifeſted to be the true Vertue of Conſtancy, which does not conſiſt in an obſtinate reſolution not to change our Opinion, let what will be produced againſt it, but in adhering to that which appears to be true, after the moſt diligent examination of all that can be ſaid againſt it. And thus Hereſies make good men more conſtant in the Truth, by giving them an opportunity of confirming themſelves in it by better Arguments, and clearer Evidence, and they manifeſt their conſtancy to the World, inaſmuch, as the Adverſaries of Truth are never wanting to ſhake the dfaſtneſs of true Believers by all ways of temptation imaginable.

3. Their Charity to others is manifeſted alſo by means of Hereſies and Oppoſition to the Truth; for here is occaſion given to ſhew their care of one another in ſatisfying the doubtful, in inſtructing the ignorant, in giving caution to the confident, and encouragement to the weak, all which are noble inſtances of Chriſti-

Chriſtian Charity: But this is not all, ſince their care to recover others from the way of Error, to reduce thoſe that are gone aſide, together with their enduring contradiction, their inſtructing in much patience, their *meekneſs towards thoſe that oppoſe themſelves*, are likewiſe manifeſted upon all ſuch occaſions.

4. Their ſincerity does likewiſe appear in another reſpect, *viz.* of defending Truth with Truth only, and a good cauſe by Innocence and honeſt means, without making uſe of Frauds, of Lies, of falſe Accuſations, of falſe Principles, of unconcluding Arguments, of any diſingenious Arts, without making advantage of the weakneſs and miſtakes of others; which one thing makes a vaſt difference between thoſe that are honeſt, and thoſe that are not: All which inſtances do expreſs the truth of that reaſon, for which God has ſtill ſuffered Hereſies to be in the Church, *That they which are approved may be made manifeſt*, (*i. e.*) that their love of the Truth, and their diligence in enquiring after it, that their conſtancy in profeſſing it, that their charity to thoſe that are, and to thoſe that are not miſled, and their ſincerity

and

and ingenuity in aſſerting Truth, and appearing for it by none, but lawful methods, and juſt arguments, may appear to the World; which as it is for the praiſe of good men, ſo there are other benefits ariſing from it; for inſtance,

1. That the belief of true Doctrine comes hereby to be eſtabliſhed upon better and firmer grounds, than in all likelihood had been diſcovered, if Oppoſition had not obliged honeſt men to dig the deeper for them; and this we have noted already.

2. That by the way many profitable Truths come to be diſcovered, which had otherwiſe lain hid: The Scriptures come to be better underſtood, and the more obſcure paſſages of it to be reaſonably well interpreted, all which is for the advantage of the Church of God. Oppoſition whets the Induſtry, and ſets an edge upon the Wit of all men good and bad; and whilſt bad men are concerned to find out all the ways of ſupporting Error, the good and honeſt are no leſs imployed to arm themſelves with all the advantages of Truth, and therefore cannot fail of arriving at greater Skill in the things of God, and a greater com-

compaſs of underſtanding in Divine matters, than if they had not been conſtrained to countermine the approaches of Error.

Laſtly, the Duty that is incumbent upon all men of Honeſty and Sincerity, to maintain the Profeſſion of the pure Doctrine of the Goſpel againſt all Hereſies whatſoever, ſhews them alſo the neceſſity of recommending true Opinions to the World by more Orthodox lives, by walking more warily, and circumſpectly, by ſetting better Examples of all kinds of Vertue and Piety, by ſhewing the force and efficacy of true Doctrine, to make men *live ſoberly, righteouſly, and godly in this preſent World:* And when God ſuffers Hereſies to prevail moſt in the Church, 'tis a loud call to all that are Friends of Truth and Goodneſs, to juſtifie his Cauſe by the ſtrongeſt Arguments, and the beſt Lives.

And now he is ſomething to blame, that will not acknowledge theſe two things to follow from what has been ſaid.

1. That Hereſies and Schiſms are no objection againſt the Providence of God.

2. That

2. That they are no objection againſt the Truth and Goodneſs of a Church.

1. That they are no objection againſt the Providence of God, ſince they have their good uſe and conſequence, for which he is pleaſed to permit them, and this eſpecially to try the Honeſty of Men, and to ſhew what they are to the World, which will in the end make extremely for the advantage of Truth; and commonly the more Hereſies there are, the more certainly is this Trial made: In the mean while it is not to be diſſembled, that yet diverſity of Sects and Parties hath its manifold miſchiefs and miſeries attending upon it; it breeds ſcandal to the World, it is the diverſion of Atheiſts and Unbelievers, it nouriſhes Diſcords and Animoſities, it removes the Contentious farther from the knowledge of the Truth, it makes the Study of good Manners, and the Practice of Holineſs and Vertue to be in a great meaſure forgotten, it leſſens the Reverence of Authority, it produces Fraud and Force, Unfaithfulneſs and Cruelty, and has made Men, and which is worſe Chriſtians, Foxes and Wolves to one another; ſo that 'tis not to be denied but Hereſies

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are in themſelves, and in their conſequences very great Evils; but then they are ſuch Evils, as the Providence of God permits for wiſe and good Ends, ſuch as I have already mentioned: They have their good conſequences as well as their bad ones, and the good that is wrought out of them is weighty enough to overballance the Evil; for the greateſt miſchief that is diſcernable in them is but this, that they do effectually draw forth that wickedneſs, which otherwiſe would have lain more undiſcovered in the Hearts of Men; but then alſo they manifeſt more clearly that Integrity, that Piety, that Diligence, and Conſtancy, and Vertue, and Charity of good Men, which otherwiſe had not ſo much appeared. Bad Men do by means of Hereſies grow worſe, and the Good grow better by them, according to that ſaying in *Daniel*, Chap. 12. 10. *The wicked ſhall do wickedly, and ſhall not underſtand, but the wiſe ſhall underſtand.* They are hardned, and theſe are *purified*, and the difference between Vertue and Sincerity on the one ſide, and Hypocriſie and Vice on the other is ſo clearly ſeen, that the good Examples will at laſt prevail againſt the ſcan-

ſcandal of thoſe that are Evil, and the indirect ways of ſupporting Error will ſhew the Simplicity and Vertue of the Children of Truth to more advantage, than it could poſſibly have had without the Compariſon; ſo that it will be much more eaſie for People of honeſt tempers and diſpoſitions, to diſcern which is the true Flock of Chriſt, and to what Communion they are to betake themſelves. When our bleſſed Saviour, and his Apoſtles planted the Church, things were not ſo ordered, as to make Proſelites of all ſorts of Men, however they were qualified, but rather to *gather together the Children of God that were ſcattered abroad*, that is, all that were of pious and honeſt Diſpoſitions, and though the mighty Evidence wherewith the Goſpel was preached, drew in ſome that were none of the beſt; yet either Perſecutions or Schiſms ſoon purged the Church of them again; and Hereſies ſeem to have been permitted ever ſince to carry on the ſame deſign of diſtinguiſhing between the Good and Bad, and making it appear more evidently, who are the faithful followers of Chriſt: And it can by no means be unworthy of the Providence of God, to

ſuffer

ſuffer thoſe Evils to happen, which he makes to work for the ſame good end, which was deſigned by that manner, wherein the Goſpel was at firſt revealed.

2. Neither are Schiſms and Hereſies any objections againſt the Truth and Goodneſs of a Church, unleſs it were always a diſparagement to be oppoſed, and forſaken, which certainly it is not; for otherwiſe Chriſtianity it ſelf, as it was taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles, muſt needs have been a falſe Religion, and the Church which they founded, a falſe Church; for thence came the *Gnoſticks* and *Valentinians*, and I know not how many Hereſies more, and the Apoſtle told the Elders at *Miletum*, Acts 20. 30. That *from themſelves would ariſe men teaching perverſe things, that would draw diſciples after them:* It is certainly for want of better Arguments, that the Reformation is to be objected againſt, upon the account of thoſe Parties, into which it is divided; and this Church of *England* for the ſake of thoſe Parties, that have broken off from the Communion of it. For as to the latter, it is either no mark of a true Church to hold faſt all that were once of it, or elſe the

Church

Church of Christ was not that true Church, since many went off from it, and which perhaps they that make this Objection will be more concerned to consider; they from whom so many Nations have broken off, cannot escape their own Censure. As for the Unity of those that keep together in one Profession and Communion, this is no certain mark of Truth, for as Men may be united in Truth, so they may be united in Error: And all parties have this mark common to them, that so far, as they do not differ, they agree together; and if this be an Argument of Truth, those Parties equally have it, that are most contrary to one another: But 'tis one of the most silly Objections in the World against a common Cause, that is maintained by People that cannot agree in many things, that therefore that Cause is naughty and erroneous; this I say is intolerably vain and impertinent, since this is to make the reason of Truth and Error to depend upon the uncertain Passions, and the Interests of Men. For by this means 'tis in the power of ill disposed Persons, that for whatever reason may bring in a new Heresie, to make all that Truth which they pro-

feſſed before, to be Truth no longer: And if it be a good Argument againſt us, it is as good an Argument againſt Chriſtianity in the general in the Mouth of a *Turk*, or a *Jew*: Chriſtians are ſo far from being agreed what is true Chriſtianity, that they are fallen into Parties, that have no Religious Communion with one another, and therefore Chriſtianity is a falſe Religion; nay, it is ſtill a ſtronger Argument in the Mouth of an Atheiſt again all Religion whatſoever, ſince *Chriſtianity*, *Mahometaniſm*, *Judaiſm*, and *Paganiſm* are at ſo great a diſtance from one another. But there needs no other anſwer to this Objection, than that which the Text affords; by which we ſee that Hereſies and Parties were unavoidable, and ſo far from being an Argument againſt the Truth of Chriſtianity, that God was pleaſed to permit them, even for the advantage of the Truth: And therefore thoſe that are ſo offended at the Diviſions of the Church, as to take occaſion from thence either to throw off the Profeſſion of Religion, till all Parties are agreed about it, or to take up with that which pretends to moſt Unity, without any farther Examination, are hereby demonſtrated to be inſincere and vicious Per-

Perſons; for as Hereſies are permitted by Providence, *That they which are approved*, ſo they are permitted, that they which are reprobate, and cannot bear a Tryal, *may be* alſo *made manifeſt*; and it is no loſs to the Truth, if ſhe be not found by thoſe that love her not: In the mean time, they that *are of God will hear his Word*, and *Wiſdom* will be *juſtified of her Children*: And that we may be found in that number, we are to make it our firſt and principal Care to avoid the greateſt Hereſie of all, and the cauſe of the reſt, and that is the Hereſie of a wicked Life, and vicious Affections: Then we ſhall be more and more *built up in our moſt Holy Faith*, and confirmed, and eſtabliſhed in the *Truth*, *as it is in Jeſus*. For as *evil Deeds* make Men *hate the Light*, ſo if our Deeds be good, and our Conſciences pure, we ſhall love the Light, and rejoyce in it; we ſhall *buy the Truth*, *and not ſell it*; we ſhall buy it with being at the pains of impartial Enquiry and Conſideration, and we ſhall not ſell it for either comfortable, or gainful Errors.

To conclude, God hath in that manner revealed the Truth, which concerns our Salvation, that they may eaſily be deceived, who are willing to be deceived, but that they who ſeek it ſincerely, ſhall be ſure to find it.

The

The Ninth Sermon.

2 PET. I. 19.

We have alſo a more ſure word of prophecy, whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that ſhineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the ſtar ariſe in your hearts.

IN theſe words St. *Peter* commendeth Believers, for taking heed, or carefully attending to the Scriptures; and moreover expreſſeth a weighty reaſon, why in doing ſo they did well, becauſe they were *the word of prophecy, and a light ſhining in a dark place, till the day dawned, and the day-ſtar aroſe in their hearts.*

I ſhall firſt endeavour to explain this reaſon for the diligent reading of the Scriptures, and ſhall try to remove thoſe Prejudices and Objections, which ſome Men have thought fit to produce againſt it; and laſtly, recommend it to your Care and Conſcience by earneſt Exhortation.

Firſt, as to the reaſon itſelf, we may obſerve that the Apoſtle had in the foregoing Verſes mentioned that Teſtimony which had been given to Jeſus by a Voice from Heaven: *But*, ſays he, *we have alſo a more ſure word of Prophecy*, (*i. e.*) we have yet a more convincing Teſtimony of God, that Jeſus is the Chriſt, *viz. The word of Prophecy:* Again it is ſaid in the following Verſes, That *no Prophecy of the Scripture is of private Interpretation*, or rather of the Prophets own skill and motion, for ſo the Original will bear, and the following words require, *For Prophecy came not of old time by the Will of Man, but Holy Men ſpake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.* From hence it is plain, that which the Apoſtle ſpeaks of that Teſtimony, the Propheſies of the Old Teſtament

give

give to Jesus, by having foretold those things concerning the *Messias*, which were fulfilled in Jesus, and in him only. So that St. *Peter* commends the Disciples of Christ for their diligent study of *Moses and the Prophets*, because their Writings did abound with those Predictions concerning Christ, which had raised an Expectation of him in the World, before he came, which would clearly demonstrate him to the World, when he should come, and which now were a most convincing Testimony that he was come, and that Jesus, in whom all those Predictions were fulfilled, was he: And that this is the sum of the Apostle's Argument, will appear by considering these particulars of the Text.

I. That the Old Testament is said to be *the word of Prophecy.*

II. *A light shining in a dark place, till the day dawned, and the day-star arose in their hearts.*

III. *A sure Word.*

IV. *A more sure word of Prophecy.*

1. That the Old Teſtament is ſaid to be *the Word of Prophecy*: The Writings of *Moſes*, and the Prophets do indeed contain other Matters, and particularly Hiſtories of things paſt, as well as Predictions of things that were to come; and yet they are called *the Word of Prophecy*. This implieth, that the main deſign and buſineſs of thoſe Holy Books, was to foretel Chriſt, by thoſe Characters of his Perſon and Circumſtances of his Appearance, that ſhould demonſtrate him afterwards: And though upon other Accounts, the Prophets had their ſeveral Arguments of Writing; yet in this they all conſpired, as St. *Peter* told *Cornelius*, and his Company: *To him give all the Prophets witneſs, that whoſoever believeth in him ſhould receive remiſſion of Sins*, Acts 8. 43. And this might in great part be made good by producing the cleareſt Prophecies of all concerning Chriſt; thoſe which ſpeak directly of him, and of nothing elſe but thoſe Circumſtances, by which he ſhould be known: Of this ſort was that Prediction of *Jacob*, that he ſhould come before the final Subverſion of the Jewiſh State:

State: *The Scepter ſhall not depart from Judah till* Shiloh *come*; And that of *Daniel*'s 70 weeks, which punctually fixeth the time of his Manifeſtation and Sufferings from the *Perſian* King's decree for the rebuilding the Walls of *Jeruſalem*. But beſides ſuch Prophecies as theſe, there is a great abundance of another ſort, ſuch namely, as are mixed with ſome things, which the Prophets ſpake of themſelves, or others, of which kind that ſeems to be one inſtance, which St. *Peter* with good ſucceſs alledged to the *Jews*, Acts 2. 25. David *ſpeaketh concerning him, the Lord is on my right hand, that I ſhould not be moved; therefore did my heart rejoyce, and my tongue was glad; moreover alſo my fleſh ſhall reſt in hope, becauſe thou wilt not leave my Soul in hell, neither wilt thou ſuffer thine holy one to ſee corruption.* Now the former Expreſſions, and indeed the reſt of the Pſalm might well be applied to *David* himſelf, but the latter were too magnificent to be true of him in any good ſenſe; and therefore St. *Peter* argued from hence in this manner, *Men and Brethren, let me freely ſpeak unto you of the Patriarch* David, *that he is both dead and buried, and his*

his Sepulchre is with us unto this day; therefore being a Prophet, and knowing that God had ſworn with an Oath unto him, that of the Fruit of his Loins according to the Fleſh he would raiſe up Chriſt to ſit upon his Throne: He ſeeing this before ſpake of the Reſurrection of Chriſt, that his Soul was not left in Hell, neither did his Fleſh ſee Corruption. Now it is no diſparagement to theſe Prophecies, that ſome paſſages they are joyned with, were meant of other Perſons, as well as of Chriſt, ſince it ſeemeth to me an Argument of the care of Divine Providence to fill the Holy Books with Predictions concerning Chriſt, that are not only diverſe Prophecies, which ſpeak entirely of him, and of him only, but upon all fit occaſions *the ſpirit of Prophecy* broke out into thoſe things which concerned him, and though other matters were begun with, yet if there was any congruity in the ſubject, it perpetually diverted into this. Hereunto we may add thoſe paſſages, which in their firſt meaning ſignified ſome things paſt or preſent, and yet were deſigned to preſignifie Chriſt too, ſuch as theſe, *Out of* Egypt *have I called my Son*, and *a Bone of him ſhall not be bro-*

broken, the former being firſt meant of the *Children of Iſrael*, the latter of the *Paſchal Lamb*, both afterwards fulfilled in Chriſt again, the true Son of God, the true Paſchal Lamb. Nay, the Omiſſion of *Melchiſedeck*'s Deſcent, Birth, and Death, did at length appear to hint this ſignification, that Chriſt, whoſe Type he was, *had neither beginning of days, nor end of life*: So truly is the Old Teſtament the word of Prophecy, that the very Omiſſion of this thing was Prophetical. To conclude this point, the moſt Illuſtrious Perſons of the Old Teſtament, as *Moſes* and *Aaron*, and *Joſhua* and *David*, and *Solomon* were deſigned by Divine Providence to repreſent before-hand by lively reſemblances, what the Meſſias ſhould be, and what he ſhould do afterwards, and the moſt memorable paſſages of the Hiſtory of the *Iſraelites*, together with the preſence of God in the Tabernacle, and in the Temple, and the whole frame of the Levitical Service were clear and natural Types of the Meſſias, and of a more perfect ſtate of things under him, foretelling in Things, as other Prophecies did in Words. The ſum of all is this, That there

there is a vaſt plenty of Predictions in the Old Teſtament concerning Chriſt, and if we will take the pains to examine the Truth of theſe general heads by more particular Enquiries, we ſhall find that the Affairs of the *Jewiſh* Nation, and the writing of the Holy Books were ſo over-ruled by the Divine Spirit, that when we come to look into them, we cannot lightly turn our ſelves any way, but we ſhall be encountred with ſome or other prophetick paſſages concerning Chriſt. All which was deſigned of God for the confirmation of our Faith, that when he ſhould come, in whom not only the plaineſt and moſt unqueſtionable Prophecies, but all other Types, and the more obſcure prefigurations of the Meſſias would be fulfilled, we might without the leaſt doubt believe, and follow him.

2. This *word of Prophecy* is ſaid to be *a light ſhining in a dark place*, the reaſon of which Expreſſion is plain enough, if we conſider, that the Prophecies were nothing ſo eaſie to be underſtood by themſelves, as they were afterwards made by the Events which they foretold,

and

and therefore till the Events made all plain, the World was very much in the dark about the meaning of them, as to moſt particulars; but yet ſome of them were ſo expreſs and full, that they had raiſed an Expectation, not only in the *Jews*, but amongſt the Gentiles alſo, of that extraordinary Perſon, whom God would ſend into the World for their relief. And therefore they might very well be compared to *a light ſhining in a dark place*: For ſuch a Light, though it doth not make a particular diſcovery of thoſe things, that lie round about it, is yet apt to draw the Eyes of all towards it, that are within diſtance; and the Predictions concerning Chriſt were ſo remarkable, that they awakened the Gentiles themſelves to take notice of them, and were therefore *a light ſhining in a dark place* to *Jews* and *Gentiles*, not indeed, clearly revealing the Truth to them at preſent, but preparing them to receive it, when it ſhould be clearly revealed in the accompliſhment of all that had been foretold.

And

And whereas this *light* was ſaid to *ſhine till the day dawned, and the day-ſtar aroſe in their hearts:* The plain meaning ſeems to be that from the beginning of the World, to the appearance of Chriſt; the Prophecies concerning him, grew ſtill more expreſs clear and particular, as the time drew on, that they were to be accompliſhed. The whole *word of Prophecy* was *a light ſhining in a dark place;* but the latter Prophecies, ſuch as in *Iſaiah*, *Daniel*, and *Malachi* were like the *dawning of the day*, before the *Sun of Righteouſneſs* himſelf appeared. By ſuch degrees did God prepare mankind for the belief of the Goſpel, every Age contributing ſomething before-hand, to undermine the Prejudices of *the Natural Man* againſt it. That God ſhould ſend his Son into the World to be a Sacrifice for Sin, was a Myſtery ſo far above the reach of worldly Wiſdom, and natural Reaſon, that conſidering our weakneſs, it would hardly have born being revealed all at once, and therefore God choſe to let mankind into the knowledge of it by degrees, and by the growing Light of Types and Pro-

Prophecies, to prepare them for that ſtronger Light of the plain and clear Truth, which in due time was to be revealed: And by this way God alſo provided a ſure foundation for their Faith, who ſhould afterwards believe; only we muſt do what St. *Peter* commends the Chriſtians of his time for doing, we muſt προσέχειν, we muſt give heed unto, and bend our Minds to conſider the *word of Prophecy*, and we muſt attend to it, as to *a light ſhineing in a dark place, till the day dawns*, that is, we muſt not content our ſelves to try any one ſingle Prediction only, to compare it with the Hiſtory of Jeſus, and then if that doth not give full ſatisfaction to try no more. But as God, by every new Prediction added more Light to *the word of Prophecy*, ſo we ſhould conſider what Evidence is given to the Goſpel by the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, taken altogether from the firſt to the laſt. And this was the Method which our Saviour took to inſtruct the two Diſciples going to *Emmaus*: They were not unacquainted with the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, and yet they

they were mightily ſtaggered at the ſhameful Death of their Maſter: *We truſted*, ſay they, *that this had been he, which ſhould have redeem'd Iſrael*, but now they know not what to think of it. *Then ſaid Jeſus* unto them, *O fools and ſlow of heart, to believe all that the Prophets have ſpoken! Ought not Chriſt to have ſuffered theſe things and to enter into his Glory?* But what courſe did he take to convince them, did he take ſome one notable Prediction by itſelf, and lay all the ſtreſs upon that? No, but *beginning at* Moſes, *and all the Prophets, he expounded to them in all the Scriptures, the things concerning himſelf.* It was this that made the *day-ſtar ariſe in their hearts*, it was this that cleared all their doubts, and enlightned their underſtandings ſo perfectly, that they afterwards ſaid one to another, *Did not our hearts burn within us, while he talked with us by the way, and while he opened to us the Scriptures*, Luke 24.

3. The word of Prophecy is ſaid to be *ſure*, that is, 'tis a plain Teſtimony of God, to make us ſure that Jeſus is the Chriſt. For,

1. It

1. It is abſurd to aſcribe the Prediction of theſe events to any cauſe, leſs than Divine Omniſcience; or as St. *Peter* ſaith, *Prophecy came not by the will of man; but holy men ſpake as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt, and no Prophecy of the Scripture is of private interpretation.* (*i. e.*) Not, as ſome would make us believe, no Prophecy of Scripture is to be meditated upon, and read by private men; but the Prophets did not utter their Predictions by the private Spirit, but by the Spirit of God; therefore if at vaſt diſtances of time from the event, it was foretold in ſeveral Ages, that one in whom *all the Nations of the Earth ſhould be Bleſſed*, would come into the world, of ſuch a Nation, of ſuch a Family, at ſuch a Time and Place, with ſeveral publick and notorious Characters, by which he ſhould be known, Then certainly he in whom all theſe Predictions have been fulfilled, is by the Teſtimony of God's Omniſcience declared to be that great *Prophet, who was to come into the World.* Or, ſhall we ſay, that theſe things were the effects of Policy, or Combination, or Chance? Could the moſt politick Stateſmen foreſee the riſe of Empires not yet begun? how much leſs could they fix their periods, as the Pro-

phets did in their Predictions concerning Christ and his Kingdom? And can we think that they could at the distance of many Ages with their utmost skill foresee so many particular events, as were foretold by the Prophets, and accomplished in Christ Jesus? Or shall we say, that there was a confederacy between *Moses* and *Jesus*, between the Prophets and Jesus, so many hundreds of years after they were dead, and before he was born? Or, are these Predictions and their events to be imputed to Chance? It is possible, indeed, that some one thing may be foretold, and happen accordingly; but that so vast a number of particulars should be foretold concerning one Person at all adventures, and by strange luck come to pass afterwards, is fit for them only to believe, that can believe that the World was made by a casual hit of Atoms. To name these things, is enough to confute them.

2. All that can be farther desired, is to be well assured, that these Prophecies were not forged by the followers of Jesus, but that they were indeed contained in the Ancient Writings, that had been delivered down to the *Jews* of our Saviour's time, by their Ancestors; and the constant testimony of the *Jews* themselves, who

who were moſt bitter enemies to Jeſus and to his Doctrine, were enough to ſatisfie us in this point.

4ly, And Laſtly, Whereas theſe Predictions are ſaid to be a *more* ſure word of Prophecy, the meaning is this, that they are a more convincing Teſtimony to Jeſus, than any other taken by its ſelf; they are indeed a more permanent Teſtimony, and withal leſs liable to Cavil and Objection. I cannot ſtand to ſhew this by making particular compariſons, but ſhall only obſerve, That Prophecy includes all other Teſtimonies, and adds ſtrength to every one of them: It comprehends the Miracles of Jeſus and of his Apoſtles, his reſurrection and aſcenſion, the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt, and the excellency of his Doctrine, becauſe theſe were all foretold: It includes all other proofs, as well as the thing proved; and thoſe proofs are the more convincing, becauſe they alſo had been foretold by the Prophets.

From all this it follows, That allowing the Scripture that Tradition, which other good Hiſtories have, and which they have more of than any other Ancient Writings in the world, then the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, and the accompliſhment of them in the New, do prove the Divine

Authority of the Scriptures, and this without the help of the Churches Authority; and well is it for the Chriſtian Religion, that the Scriptures may be proved without the Authority of the Church, for otherwiſe Chriſtianity muſt never look an Infidel in the face, ſince the Church hath no Authority at all, till we are aſſured of the truth of the Scriptures themſelves. And I will make bold to add, That when all thoſe objections againſt the Authority of the Old Teſtament, from the time wherein it was put into this form of Books, from the light overſights of Tranſcribers, from various readings, and all the cavils upon any part of it, are put together, the word of Prophecy which runs through it all, will bear all this reckoning, and ſtill remain an invincible argument, that the firſt Authors were inſpired; that *the Prophecy came not in Old time by the will of man, but that holy men of God ſpake, as they were moved by the Holy Ghoſt.*

Well therefore might St. *Peter* commend the *Jewiſh* Converts for *taking heed to the Word of Prophecy*, ſince this was the way to come to a well-grounded Faith indeed, and to grow every day to greater aſſurance and ſtedfaſtneſs therein; and

and for the ſame reaſon, let us, I beſeech you, be exhorted to like diligence in converſing with the Holy Scriptures, that our minds may be more enlightned with the knowledge of Divine truth, and that every doubt, if any there be, that ſhakes our Faith, may be removed.

And this Exhortation is ſo needful, that I ſhall ſhew, that there is no good reaſon in their objection againſt it, who have taken a great deal of pains to exclude all but the Clergy, and thoſe that have ſpecial licenſe from reading the Scriptures; the ſum of what they ſay is this, That the promiſcuous Liberty of reading the Scriptures leads the People into pride and ſelf-conceit, makes them inſolent and ungovernable, and ready to throw off all Reſpect to their lawful Guides. That almoſt all Hereſies have proceeded from Miſinterpretation of Scripture; and that there are ſo many obſcure and difficult places in the Old and New Teſtament, that to tranſlate the Bible into Vulgar Tongues, and to encourage the People to read it, is to betray them into the danger of infinite errors, which they are likely enough to fall into, by miſtaking the ſence of the holy Text, which therefore is to be kept out of the hands of the Laity, as we

would keep Children from medling with edged Tools, and lay Swords out of madmen's way.

Now if this charge be true, the *Bible* is a very dangerous Book; if it be not true, there is ſome other reaſon doubtleſs, why they that pretend this, have no kindneſs for the *Bible*. I ſhall omit ſeveral advantages that may be taken againſt this flouriſh, becauſe I think it may be ſhown very briefly, that it pretends things that do by no means hang well together; that it takes things for granted that are not true; and that it concludes as ſtrongly againſt the Scriptures being read by the Clergy, as by the Laity.

It pretends ſome things that do not hang well together. On the one ſide they tell us that the liberty of reading the *Bible* is apt to make the People throw off all dependance upon the Prieſt, as to inſtruction: on the other ſide, that there are obſcure and difficult paſſages in it, by miſtaking the true ſenſe of which they will be led into Hereſie, and conſequently into the way of Damnation. Now indeed the Scriptures ſay this of themſelves, that there are diverſe *things hard to be underſtood* in them, *which ignorant and unſtable men have wreſted to their own deſtruction.*

ſtruction. But if this be true, the beſt way to keep the People in modeſt dependance upon the inſtruction of their Spiritual Guides, is to lay the *Bible* before them, and not to keep it from them; ſince there cannot be a more convincing Argument of the neceſſity of attending to their Paſtors in order to farther Inſtruction, than the ſeveral difficulties that occur in the Scriptures, and the warnings that the Scriptures themſelves have given of the danger that *unlearned* and unſtable men are in, of wreſting them to their own deſtruction. If it be ſaid, that experience ſhews the contrary; and that neither this nor any other argument can make People modeſt, if they are generally permitted to have the Scriptures; I add,

2. That this arguing takes things for granted, which are not true in point of fact; all the Faithful anciently had the Scriptures, but we find little complaint by the Biſhops and Clergy then of the Wantonneſs and Inſolence of the People; ſo little in compariſon of the frequent and earneſt exhortations, that all would diligently Read the Scriptures, that it may be ſaid to be none at all. Chriſtian People that had been trained up in the firſt Ru-

diments of the Faith were not only allowed then, but required to Read the *Bible*; and yet they modeſtly attended upon their Spiritual Guides, for farther Inſtruction out of the *Bible*. And therefore if ſome men in later Ages have groſly Miſinterpreted the Scriptures, and would not be ſet right by thoſe, that had more skill to Interpret them; this doth not prove, that the reading of the Scriptures makes the People ungovernable, for then it muſt always have been ſo, which is notoriouſly falſe. And whereas it is ſaid, that almoſt all Hereſies have come of Miſ-interpreting Scripture, this doth not prove that Chriſtian People muſt not read the Scriptures, for it cannot be denied, that thoſe Hereſies which have given any conſiderable diſturbance to the Church of God, were begun, not by Laicks or illiterate Perſons; but by ſuch men as the objectors do allow to have a right of reading and ſtudying the Scriptures, (*i. e.*) by Biſhops or Prieſts. Wherefore.

In the laſt place, The Arguing of theſe men againſt the common uſe of the *Bible*, concludes againſt the Prieſt, as ſtrongly as againſt the People. For if to prevent Hereſie, the Scriptures are to be kept from Lay-men, who may bring Hereſie into the

the Church by Miſinterpreting the Scriptures, then for the ſame reaſon men in Orders ſhould not be ſuffered to read them, ſince they have actually been the founders of Hereſie; Nay, the reaſon is ſomething ſtronger, ſince the wreſting of the Holy Text by men of Office or Learning, will be of greater Authority and do more miſchief, than the miſtakes of private and unlearned Perſons. But if the danger of perverting difficult places, be a good reaſon to deprive men of all uſe of the *Bible*; this reaſon hath a particular force upon ſome men, that they ſhould never look upon a *Bible* more. For the beſt way to Judge how the Scriptures are likely to be uſed by any ſort of men, is to conſider how they have conſtantly uſed them heretofore; and let any indifferent man judge of them by theſe following inſtances; Becauſe God ſaid, *Let us make man after our own Image*, therefore it is lawful to fall down before an Image of Wood, or Stone. Becauſe Chriſt ſaid to *Peter*; *Feed my ſheep*, Therefore his pretended Succeſſors have power to depoſe Heretical Princes. Becauſe *Peter* ſaid to Chriſt, *Lord here are two Swords*, therefore they have a Temporal, as well as a Spiritual juriſdiction.

Becauſe

Becauſe *Jacob* in Bleſſing *Ephraim* and *Manaſſes*, prayed *that his Name might be Named on them*, Therefore it is lawful to pray to Saints. Becauſe it is ſaid, the Diſciples met together to *break Bread*, therefore the Laity may be deprived of the Cup. Becauſe St. *Paul* ſaith of him that prayeth in a Tongue not underſtood by others, *Thou verily giveſt thanks well, but the other is not edified*; therefore it is in it ſelf good to appoint publick Prayers in a Language unknown to the People; that is, Becauſe he that underſtands what himſelf ſays, doth well for himſelf becauſe he underſtands, therefore he doth well for others that underſtand not a word, and are therefore not edified. Becauſe the Apoſtle ſaith, we muſt *Glorifie God with one mouth*; therefore in all publick Offices of Liturgy, there is to be but one, and that the Latin Tongue in all places of *Chriſtendome*. Becauſe that many Languages at *Babel* cauſed confuſion, therefore for God to be ſerved in the many Vulgar Tongues of Chriſtian Nations, would breed Schiſms in the Church. Becauſe the *Beaſt that touched the Mountain was to die*; and becauſe Chriſt ſaid, *Give not that which is Holy to Dogs*; therefore ordinary People are not to have the

the *Bible.* Theſe expoſitions are not invented, but there are good Authorities for them, and for a great many more of the like ſort.

I know not what can farther be objected but this, That if Prieſts and Learned men have been ſo foully miſtaken in the Interpretation of Scripture, how much more are the Unlearned in danger of falling into miſtakes, which though perhaps will never come to be Hereſies in the Church, may yet prove damnable to themſelves, as St. *Peter* plainly ſaith?

To which I anſwer, That St. *Peter's Unlearned* Men were ſuch as had not yet attained to the knowledg of the neceſſary Doctrine of Faith and good Life, as appears by his calling them *unſtable*, not yet fixt in a perſuaſion of the plain truths, and great ends of the Goſpel; and ſuch as thoſe, whether they were men of good parts or not, were likely enough to Interpret the hard places of St. *Paul's* Epiſtles to a ſenſe conttary to the plain and open truths of the Goſpel. But if a man be inſtructed in the neceſſary and plain Doctrine of Chriſtianity, and moreover furniſhed with Modeſty and a ſincere Love of the Truth, and willingneſs to learn, qualities that ought to be common

to

to all, he ſhall be as far from wreſting the difficult Scriptures to his own deſtruction, as one that hath vaſtly greater abilities. Nay, I will add one thing, which if it be true, there is no force at all in the objection, and that is this, That the ſervice of a Cauſe, and eſpouſing the Intereſt of a by-Party, doth more fatally lead to Miſinterpretation of the Scripture, than bare weakneſs of underſtanding; and there is this plain reaſon for it, becauſe Modeſty and Love of the truth will ſecure a man of no great abilities, from raſh concluding upon the difficult Places of Scripture; but Partiality, and the ſervice of a by cauſe, ſhall engage a man of parts and learning, to trouble the cleareſt, and to pervert the plaineſt Texts, as the forementioned inſtances evidently ſhew. So that either the danger of Miſinterpreting Scripture is no ſufficient reaſon to prohibit the Laity from reading it; or elſe it were better that no Order of Men were truſted with it at all; and if that be true, I think it will follow, that it had better never have been written at all, which no man will ſay, whatever he thinks.

But to ſpeak to the thing; the Scriptures were written for an univerſal good, and in order thereunto, for common uſe: Here

Here are all Divine truths, and reaſons of Chriſtian Faith and Practice, that are neceſſary to be known of every man, plainly expreſt for the uſe of the meaneſt Capacities. Here are alſo difficulties and myſteries of ſeveral ſizes, fit to imploy the Induſtry of the Learned according to the ſeveral degrees of their abilities, and to exerciſe the Modeſty, the Humility, and the Reverence of all. But ſtill we confeſs, that they may be perverted and abuſed; and if this be a ſufficient reaſon to Interdict the general uſe of them, then farewel at once to all the Comforts of this Life, and to all the means of grace in order to a better, with every one of which men in their folly and wickedneſs may and very often have hurt themſelves and others. St. *Peter* was aware of this, that ſome men wreſted thoſe hard things in St. *Paul's* Epiſtles, and in other Scriptures, to their own deſtruction; but did he therefore diſſuade the Faithful from reading them? No, but in the very ſame Epiſtle, he commends them all for *taking heed to the words of Prophecy* of the Old Teſtament, in which there were ſome things as hard, to be ſure, as any are in St. *Paul's* Writings: and I hope, St. *Peter* was as Wiſe a Man in this point, as any that have come after him. And

And now, I beseech you, let us not say, That we are believers already, and therefore we need not trouble our selves with constant reading of the *Bible*. Were not they so to whom St. *Peter* wrote? Nay the Apostles were then alive to instruct them by Word, as well as by Writing, and moreover daily Miracles were wrought for confirmation of the Faith, yet they did well in taking diligent heed to the Scriptures. And shall not we do so too, who can find Apostles and Miracles no where but there? We believe already, but have we all of us that stedfast Faith, which the Gospel requires, which is not grounded merely upon education, and the customs of our Country, but upon *the Demonstration of the Spirit and of Power*? Have we that Faith, which will bear examination, and encounter opposition? If we have, a very little exhortation will serve the turn, to make us persevere in reading God's Book, whereby we shall be yet more strongly *built up in our most Holy Faith*. But if not, our want of Faith will not be admitted at the last day, for an excuse of the badness of our Lives, when we had the Scriptures laid before us, the Holy Scriptures, I say, which if they had been diligently and honestly

read

read by us, would have furnished us with such an immoveable ground of our Christian belief, as would have supported us in the Day of Temptation. Nay, if our Faith was grown never so strong, yet the Reading of the Scriptures would be necessary for us, to make the precepts and rules of the Christian Life, and the Motives, and Reasons, of practising them, daily present in our minds. For the Temptations to sin are always present; the snares of Hell are still round about us; we are ever in some danger, and therefore we ought always to *be strong in the Lord*; by having a constant sense of those Divine Truths upon our minds, which are our great defence and security. And I see not how this can be, if we neglect to have recourse unto that ever necessary Treasure of Divine truth, the Holy Word of God. St. *Chrysostom* therefore doubted not to say, and I wish we may all well consider, that earnest saying of so Wise and Holy a Man as he was; *It cannot be*, says he, *It cannot possibly be, that a man should attain Salvation, unless he be diligently conversant in Spiritual Reading.* Himself was so excellent and constant a Preacher, that if any one man, not extraordinarily inspired, could have made it need-

needleſs for his hearers to Read the Scriptures at home; he, I ſhould reckon, was the man; and yet I obſerve, he often complains to them, that the reaſon why moſt of them gained little profit by what he ſaid, either as to improvement of knowledg, or good practice, was becauſe they did not read the Scriptures he explained to them, either before or after his Sermons: and ſays he, *it is the neglect of this reading, that cauſeth all Hereſie, and Corrupt Life.*

Now I beſeech you, how much time do we ſpend in other things of little concern to us, either as to our Health, or Wealth, or our Worldly Callings? And what a ſhame, and a ſin is it for us to find ſo little time as generally we do, to furniſh our ſelves with the knowledg of God's Truth, and with pious affections towards the doing of his will, out of God's Holy Book? What a great matter were it, if we borrowed ſome time for this purpoſe from our Recreations, or even from our ordinary buſineſs? For what is this Life to Life Everlaſting? What is the Wealth and Pleaſure of this World, to our Salvation in the World to come? And therefore the forementioned excellent Perſon argued with his hearers in this man-

manner: Perhaps ſome may ſay, That they are otherwiſe imployed in their worldly callings; and others, that they have not money to ſpare to buy the Scriptures; but, ſays he, what a ridiculous thing would it be for a man of a Secular imployment, to neglect it upon pretence, that he has not time for it, or that he has not wherewithal to purchaſe the neceſſary Tools of his Calling? Theſe things are ſeldom or never pleaded, but by Idle Perſons: And do you not all know, that you are profeſſed Chriſtians, and called to the hope of Eternal Life, and that diligent reading and hearing the Holy Scriptures is as neceſſary to your Chriſtian Calling, as any thing can be, to the ſucceſsful management of your Secular profeſſions?

I ſhall add this one thing, That beſides that improvement in knowledge and virtue, which is naturally conſequent upon much converſing with God's Book, they that do ſo, have a peculiar title to God's ſupernatural Bleſſing; who is wont to reward a pious and reverent uſe of Holy things with greater meaſures of his grace. In one word, by other ſtudies we may grow wiſe for this world, but if we add this to the

rest, we shall yet grow wiser for this world, by *taking heed to* those incomparable instructions, that the Holy *Bible* abounds with; and which is something more, we shall grow *wise unto Salvation.*

The Tenth Sermon.

1 Cor. XII. 13.

For by one ſpirit are we all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles; whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one ſpirit.

AFTER the deſcent of the Holy Ghoſt upon the Apoſtles, there was a continual Communication of Supernatural and Extraordinary Gifts to other believers for a long time. *To one was given by the Spirit the Word of Wiſdom; To another the Word of Knowledge by the ſame Spirit; To another Faith by the ſame Spirit; To another the gifts of Healing by the ſame Spirie; To another working of Miracles, To a-*

nother Diſcerning of Spirits; To another Divers kinds of Tongues; To another the Interpretation of Tongues; But all theſe worketh that one and the ſelf-ſame Spirit, dividing to every man ſeverally as he will. And this *manifeſtation of the Spirit was given to every man to profit withal;* (*i. e.*) to profit the whole Body, whereof himſelf was a Member. For though that one Spirit, which diſtributed his wonderful gifts amongſt the Faithful, could have given them all to the ſame man, ſo as that one and the ſame Perſon ſhould have had the Word of Wiſdom, and the Gifts of Healing, and the Working of Miracles, and a Prophetick Power, and Diſcerning of Spirits, and Divers kinds of Tongues; yet to maintain a mutual dependance, and a Charitable ſerviceableneſs of the Members, one amongſt another, he gave to one one gift; to another, another; dividing ſeverally to every man; for by this means one would ſtand in need of another, and each Member would be obliged to take care of the reſt, knowing that he alſo wanted the ſupply of that aſſiſtance, which the reſt were able to give him; whereas if one man had all gifts, he would not be under ſo ſenſible an obligation of conſulting for the common good,

good, wanting no aſſiſtance from any others. But God ordered the ſtate of the Church, like that of the Natural Body; to which the Apoſtle elegantly compares the Body of Chriſt: *The eye cannot ſay unto the hand, I have no need of thee; nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you, v.* 21.

Now it being the Apoſtle's deſign in this Chapter to preſs the Chriſtians to Charity and Unity, and mutual ſerviceableneſs one to another as Members of the ſame Body, he aſſures them in the Words of the Text, which I have choſen, That they were indeed Members of one Body, and he tells them what it was that made them ſo. *For by one ſpirit*, ſays he, *we are all baptized into one body; whether we be Jews or Gentiles; and have been made to drink into one ſpirit*; That is, by being Baptized, they were made Members of the Body of Chriſt, and united one to another under him the Head; and this, *whether they were Jews or Gentiles; bond or free* (*i. e.*) whatever worldly circumſtances made any diſtinction between them, yet all they were one in *Chriſt*, who profeſſed his Faith, and were by Baptiſm admitted into his Church. And this Union of one to another under Chriſt, was

teſtified and declared by their Communion in the Table of the Lord.

And whereas he ſays, that by *one Spirit* they were baptized into this *one Body*, and were all made to *drink into one Spirit*; the meaning is, that the Grace of the Holy Spirit was given in Baptiſm, and in the Lords Supper, to all the Faithful: who do not receive unprofitable ſigns, but one as well as another receives the quickning Grace of God, to make them living Members of that one Body.

So that although there was a diverſity and an equality in the Spiritual Gifts that were diſtributed among the Faithful in thoſe dayes, yet they were all equally Members of the ſame Body of Chriſt, in as much as they were all Baptized into his Body; and were all equally Partakers of his Table.

And thus I have explained the meaning of the Text with the relation it hath to the deſign of the Apoſtle in this Chapter. That which remains, is to ſpeak to the particular deſign of the Text, which is to ſhew that Chriſtians are one Body or Society of Men, and wherein the *Unity of the Church* conſiſts, and what our part is to maintain it: and how we may in this

this divided ſtate of Chriſtianity be ſatisfied, that we are within that Unity. Before I enter upon which, I may well make two obſervations upon the Text in behalf of the Doctrine and Practice of this our Church of *England*.

1. That St. *Paul* thought the obſervation of the two inſtitutions of our Saviour, *viz.* Baptiſm, and the Communion of the Holy Table, was a ſufficient proof, that believers were one Body: And we have reaſon to believe, that if he had known there were other Sacraments, or outward badges of Chriſtian profeſſion inſtituted by Chriſt for the Church, which is his Body; he would not have omitted the mention of them here, where he proves the Unity of the Church by Baptiſm, and Communion of the Body and Blood of Chriſt. We know that the Evangeliſts mention no other outward ſigns, and viſible tokens of our profeſſion, and God's Grace, but Baptiſm, and the Lord's Supper: And it is ſomething to our purpoſe, that St. *Paul* owns no more than theſe; where he induſtriouſly proves, that Chriſtians are one Body by theſe.

2. I obſerve, that the Communion of the Lords Table is deſcribed by *drinking into one Spirit* (*i. e.*) by one part of the

Sacrament, as ſometimes it is by the other of *breaking of bread.* But then nothing can be more plain from ſuch expreſſions, than that one part or kind is as neceſſary as the other; becauſe ſometimes one, ſometims the other is put for both; which had been againſt all rules of ſpeaking, if it had been allowable to ſeparate the one from the other. But as to that of Drinking the Cup, it is moſt evident that it belonged to all; for ſays St. *Paul, We have all been made to drink into one Spirit.* All who? All the Prieſts of the Chriſtian Church only? No: all that belong to the Body of Chriſt, *whether Jews or Gentiles, bond or free.* But now if St *Paul* had known, that it was not neceſſary for the Chriſtian People to drink of the Cup in the Communion, but that it was ſufficient for them to have received the Bread only; Can we think, that he would have deſcribed their receiving the Sacrament, by receiving a part of it, which did not neceſſarily belong to them, and not rather by that which did? I do not make this obſervation to prove only, that the People did at firſt univerſally receive the Cup; for that is not denied by any, but by thoſe who have diſputed themſelves out of all Modeſty, and even theſe may

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be convinced beyond all doubt by this very place, that all the Faithful in St. *Paul's* days received the Cup; for otherwiſe how could he with truth have ſaid, that they had been *all made to drink into one Spirit.* But that which I chiefly obſerve is this, That though the Faithful did in thoſe days drink as well as eat at the Lord's Table, yet if the Apoſtle had known, and ſurely he knew it, if it was true, that however it was the practice then, yet it might without injury be altered in after times, he would not have uſed an argument to ſatisfie the Faithful of his time, that they all belonged to the Body of Chriſt, which might afterwards be quite out of doors, *viz.* when the Church ſhould pleaſe to alter the Inſtitution of our Saviour in this matter; but he would rather have inſiſted upon receiving in that kind, which could not be juſtly taken away from them, and have ſaid that all had been Baptized into the Body of Chriſt, or made Members of his Church by Baptiſm; and all that are of his Body may claim to eat of *that one Bread.* This by the bye.

I now addreſs my ſelf to the main buſineſs I propounded, which is to ſtate the notion of the *Unity of the Church,* to ſh w what

what is meant by it, and to make ſome Inferences from it for our farther inſtruction.

And in the firſt place, it is evident, that St. *Paul* here ſpeaks not of any one particular Church, but of the Society of all Chriſtians whatſoever, that are Baptized, and have a right to the Holy Communion, whether they be *Jews* or *Gentiles*: And it is concerning the Unity of this Church that we are to enquire, or what that is which makes it *one Body*, as the Apoſtle here calls it.

To which purpoſe we are to conſider diſtinctly, what are the ſeveral grounds or notions of Unity, which are laid down in the New Teſtament, or what thoſe things are that belong in common to all Chriſtians, as their Duty or their Priviledg, and in reſpect of their joint performance of the former of which, and their enjoyment of the latter, they may be ſaid to be *One*.

1. Therefore all Chriſtians do unite in their profeſſion to ſubmit to one Head, who is our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, which is ſo neceſſary a duty incumbent on all, that he who makes not this profeſſion, is in no reſpect within the Unity of the Church; this being the ground of all o-

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ther reaſons of Unity whatſoever; and therefore the Apoſtle makes this to be one principal foundation of the Unity of the Church, that it profeſſes ſubjection to one Lord; *Epheſ.* 4. 5. And in the third verſe of this Chapter he layes down this mark of diſtinction between the impulſe of the Spirit of God, and the impulſe of an evil Spirit; That whoſoever is led by the former, *doth ſay that Jeſus is the Lord.*

They are alſo *One* in profeſſing the Common Faith, that *was at firſt delivered to the Saints*; which began to be Preached when the Holy Ghoſt deſcended upon the Apoſtles, and hath ever ſince been contained in the Holy Scriptures, and ſummarily expreſſed in the Ancient Creeds: And therefore to *one Lord*, the Apoſtle doth in the forementioned place add *one Faith*: Thus we find in *Rom.* 6. 17. That one *Form of Doctrine* was delivered to Chriſtians, and that they are to *ſtand faſt in one Spirit; and with one mind, ſtriving together for the Faith of the Goſpel*, Phil. 1. 27. Thus St *Paul* charged *Timothy*; That *if any man taught otherwiſe, and conſented not to wholſome Words, the words of our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, and to the Doctrine which is according to Godlineſs,*

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he ſhould from ſuch withdraw himſelf, 1 *Tim.* 6. 3. not looking upon them any longer as Chriſtians, or as ſuch converſing with them; which together with many other like paſſages manifeſtly ſhews, that he who in any point departed from the common faith of Chriſtians, that was received from the Apoſtles, was broken off from the Unity of the Church, which is *One* by a Common profeſſion of certain points of Grand importance taught at firſt by the Holy Spirit. For which reaſon St. *Cyprian* doubted not to ſay, *He cannot ſeem a Chriſtian, who doth not perſiſt in the Unity of Chriſt's Goſpel and Faith.*

3. There is an Unity of Sacraments in the Chriſtian Church; *One Baptiſm*, by which we are all admitted into the ſame ſtate of Duties and Priviledges. undertaking the conditions of the New Covenant, and gaining a right to the promiſes thereof; and therefore the Apoſtle adds alſo *One Baptiſm.* And here in the Text he expreſly affirms, that by one Spirit we are Baptized into one Body; into one Body of People, profeſſing one Common Faith, and claiming the Priviledges belonging to ſuch a profeſſion. The like Unity is inferred from the other Sacrament, ſince we *are all made to drink into one Spirit.*

Spirit. And in the 10*th* Chapter of this Epiſtle, *v.* 16, 17. he ſaith: *The Cup of bleſſing, which we bleſs, is it not the Communion of the Blood of Chriſt? The bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Chriſt: For we being many are one Bread, and one Body; for we are all partakers of that one Bread.*

4. There is alſo an Unity of Obedience to the ſame Laws and Inſtitutions: For to all Chriſtians it equally belongeth to govern themſelves effectually by the will of their Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to obſerve his Ordinances and Commands; by the doing of which they declare themſelves to be of his Flock, in that they *hear his voice*; and of his Kingdom, in that they live by his Laws; and that as there is one and the ſame obligation, ſo there is one and the ſame correſpondent practice, one and the ſame Spirit of Obedience that runs through all.

5. There is alſo an Unity of Affection, or mutual Charity preſcribed to the Church. Thus ſaith our Saviour: *By this ſhall all men know that ye are my diſciples, if ye love one another.* Thus ſaith the Apoſtle in this Chapter; *The Members ſhould have the ſame care one for another; and whether one member ſuffer, all*

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the members ſuffer with it; or one member be honoured, all the members rejoyce with it: which kind of Unity appeared moſt viſibly after the Church was begun, on *the day of Pentecoſt*; for it is obſerved preſently, that *the multitude of them that believed, were of one heart, and of one Soul.* Acts 4. 32.

6. There is alſo an Unity of Communion in the Service and Worſhip of God, in joining together in the ſame Acts of Piety and Devotion, according to the Rules of the Goſpel, in Prayers and in Sacraments; and in *glorifying God with one mouth*; moreover in the common defence of the ſame Truth; and in the joint oppoſition of every dangerous error, in propagating and promoting the ſame Faith of the Goſpel, and ſtriving together for the intereſt of it.

7. There is alſo an Unity of Diſcipline or Government, which is to be maintained by every Member's keeping in his Place and Order in the Church; the People of Chriſt receiving the Myſteries of Chriſtianity from their Paſtors; and theſe confederating one with another for the maintenance of common Chriſtianity, without invading each others Liberty and Juriſdiction, and accommodating as near

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as may be, all Rites of Diſcipline and Worſhip to one another, and aſſiſting each other by Advice and Correſpondence, and giving no occaſion to breach of Charity and Chriſtian Communion, by abuſing a lawful, or by claiming an undue Authority.

Other more particular Inſtances might be mentioned, but I ſhall content my ſelf with theſe, believing that upon theſe Grounds of Unity, which I have noted, it will not be difficult to ſatisfie thoſe ſcruples which have been thrown into ſome mens minds concerning the neceſſity of being of that one Church, which is the Body of Chriſt, and they are chiefly two.

1. That there muſt be one Church; which is the only Church of Chriſt, excluſively to all the reſt, that are not in Communion with her.

2. That where there is moſt Unity, there of neceſſity muſt be the true Church.

1. That there is but one Society or Communion, which is the Body of Chriſt, excluſively to all other Communions whatſoever. For thus they argue; The Apoſtle here, and the New Teſtament elſewhere affirms, That the diſciples

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of Christ are *one Body*. If therefore there be, as there are ſeveral Bodies of Chriſtians in this divided ſtate of Chriſtendom, that are not United in Communion, in Worſhip, in Government, no nor in Doctrine neither; theſe cannot all be the Body of Chriſt, which is but one, and therefore there muſt be but one of them which is that *Body of Chriſt*, or *the true Church*: And from hence they proceed farther; ſince we grant that they are a Church, we do in effect grant that we are not ſo much as a part of the true Church our ſelves, becauſe we are not in Communion with them, and we and they are not Members of one another, as all the Members of the Church are.

Which kind of reaſoning, how likely ſoever it may be to confound and amuſe a Man, is by no means fit to unſettle a prudent, nor ſo much as an honeſt Perſon, if he will give himſelf leave to conſider.

The plain Anſwer to theſe harangues is this, That Chriſtians are not United into one Body or Church in all reſpects, but in ſome they are. There is the Unity of *one Lord*, and *one Faith*, and *one Baptiſm*, which makes them *one Body*: But then alas, they are not always one Body in reſpect of Unity and Affection, and

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good will towards one another, nor in reſpect of Unity of Communion in the Service of God, or of Diſcipline and Government as they ought to be. But now the profeſſion of the ſame *Faith which was once delivered to the Saints*; and Admiſſion into the ſtate of Chriſtian Duties and Priviledges by Baptiſm, is that which makes a Chriſtian, and which Unites all Chriſtian Societies into one Body. They indeed who are defective in this, are no Chriſtians; and they who come thus far, are ſo; becauſe *we are all Baptized into one Body.* But then we grant, there ought to be a farther Unity, and in particular an Unity of Communion; for the uniting of the Members of this Body more ſtrictly to one another: But though there be not Unity of Communion, they do not therefore ceaſe to be Members of one Body; but all that can be truly ſaid is, that ſome of the Members are contentious, and either give juſt cauſe of offence, or take offence when none is given; which is indeed contrary to the duty of the Members of the Church, but not utterly inconſiſtent with their being Members of it: And for this, we have the Authority of St. *Paul* in the two verſes, next but one to the Text.

If the foot ſhall ſay, Becauſe I am not the hand, I am not of the Body, is it therefore not of the Body? That is, if the Members of the Body of Chriſt do contrary to their duty in ſome reſpect, it doth not follow preſently that they are no longer parts of the Church; and if one Church will have no Communion with another, but upon moſt unjuſt and unreaſonable Terms, it is very certain that Unity of Communion is not likely to laſt between them. But ſo long as there is an Unity of Faith (*i. e.*) a conſent in profeſſing the neceſſary Articles of Chriſtianity, they are yet one Body, though one part of it doth not perform the duty incumbent on it, as it is a part of the Church, but will perhaps be the whole or nothing; and is not content to profeſs the firſt Faith, but moreover adds new Doctrines thereto, contrary to the Scriptures, and would impoſe them upon the reſt of the Chriſtian World. We may therefore in reſpect of Faith and Baptiſm grant, That Church which would be all in all, to be within the Unity of the Catholick Church, though we are not in Communion with it; but then in reſpect of Unity of Affection and Charity, and Unity of Communion in the Service of God, and in oppoſing

poſing all dangerous errors; and Unity of Government in theſe reſpects, I ſay, ſhe is not within the Unity of the Body, in as much as ſhe doth contrary to her Duty in all theſe reſpects. So that though the Church be one in reſpect of Baptiſm, and the principal Articles of Chriſtianity, yet becauſe it is not one in other reſpects, I am by no means ſtartled at that charge, *You and we are two Churches, becauſe we are of oppoſite Communions, and therefore if you grant us to be a True Church, you muſt conclude your ſelf not to be ſo.* For I have this to anſwer, That Faith which you profeſs with us, That Baptiſm which you adminiſter, and receive with us, is that which makes you to be of the Church, and thus far you are one with us; 'Tis true indeed there ought to be Unity in maintaining Communion in all Chriſtian Offices, and to that end no falſe Doctrines are to be added to the profeſſion of the Faith, nor any unlawful practices to be brought into Gods worſhip; but this is that which we cannot help, though you can; and by ſuch things as theſe, you have departed from the Unity that ought to be in the Church, but we have not. To make which anſwer more plain, let it be remembred, That one inſtance of that U-

ty, which ought to be in the Church, is keeping all the Commandments of God. Now all unholy Perſons profeſſing Chriſtianity, do depart from this Unity; yet inaſmuch as they are Baptized, and profeſs the Creed, we own that they are viſible parts of the Church: But now becauſe they are ſo, if they ſhould charge all thoſe that take not the ſame liberties they do, with being out of the Church, becauſe the Church is one Body, and they are granted to be of it; I think nothing could be more ridiculous; and it is little better that they ſay, who under the Protection of this Principle, That the Church is but One, would exclude all from being Parts of the Church who do not run into the ſame enormities about Doctrine, Worſhip, and Government with themſelves. In a Word; the Church is one in reſpect of the Common Faith, which is profeſſed every where amongſt Chriſtians, and it ought to be one; but is not in reſpect of Purity of Profeſſion, and of Worſhip and Government: But it doth not from hence follow, that they, who are in the right, muſt go over to thoſe that are in the wrong, in order to being a part of the Church, for that they are already; but they that are in the wrong ſhould learn to do

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their duty better, that they may become a purer part of the Church, which yet they are not.

2. We are born in hand alſo, That where there is moſt Unity, there muſt of neceſſity be the True Church; and this, becauſe there is but *One Body*: Concerning which I ſay, That if by Unity be meant Agreement in all points of any great conſequence, they that advance this Principle, have advanced it againſt themſelves; for it muſt be a very uncomfortable one to thoſe, that in many matters differ notoriouſly amongſt themſelves. But,

1. The Principle it ſelf is falſe; for there may be Unity in Error, as well as in Truth, and there hath been ſo. The Falſe Prophets in *Elias* his Time were at Unity, ſo were the *Scribes* and *Phariſees*, that conſented to our Saviour's Death; no, nor *is Satan divided againſt himſelf*: It is not merely Unity, that is a mark of a True Church, unleſs it be Unity in the True Faith; nor is Unity the mark of a Pure Church, unleſs it be upon Terms of Obedience to God, of Charity to one another, of keeping the Faith unmixed with Errors and Innovations, and the Worſhip of God free from material de-

ſects and forbidden Practices. Unity in Error and Sin is to be broken; Unity only in Faith and Goodneſs is to be preſerved.

2. It is poſſible that where there are diſcords, there may be yet more truth profeſſed, than where there are none; and that for the former reaſon, Becauſe there may be Unity in the worſt Errors. Beſides the Common Faith that is profeſſed by all Chriſtians, one part of the Church may maintain the Purity of that Profeſſion againſt another that hath ſuperadded New and Falſe Doctrines to it, and yet the Reformed part may labour under diſcords, that affect their very Communion, while the other doth not. There may be onthe one ſide diſobedience to Authority, overvaluing of queſtions of no great moment, a greater ſtreſs laid upon Opinions or Practices, than the Cauſe will bear, and this ſhall be ſufficient to break Chriſtian Communion; and at the ſame time, whilſt groſs Errors are maintained on the other ſide with one conſent, the differences that happen by the bye may be ſo over-ruled by Authority, by Force and Power, and by the ſenſible Intereſts of this World, that how wide ſo ever they are, they ſhall not yet rend

rend Communion. But in ſuch a caſe, it were the fondeſt thing in the World to chuſe a Doctrine by the mark of Unity among thoſe that profeſs it. Therefore in this divided State of Chriſtendom, it is eaſie to ſee, what Chriſtians are to do, to preſerve the Unity of the Body of Chriſt, as much as in them lies, and to be ſure that they are within the Unity of the Church in all reſpects.

1. I need not ſay, that they are to *ſtand faſt in the Faith which was firſt delivered to the Saints*, in the Common Faith of Chriſtians; for without this, they could not ſo much as continue in that Body, into which they were Baptized; only I may add, That they are to lay it up in their hearts, and to value it as the greateſt Treaſure, and to proclaim their eſteem of it, and to acknowledg all that profeſs it, to be of the ſame Body with them. This being that Faith which Chriſt came down from Heaven to eſtabliſh in the World, and which he ſent the Holy Ghoſt to inſpire his Apoſtles withal, to reveal it to us, and to confirm it for us, by the Writings, and by the Miracles of inſpired Perſons; 'Tis by this Faith and this Profeſſion therefore, which includes Baptiſm, that they are Chriſtians, who

will not allow us to be of the Church.

2. Let them keep themſelves from entertaining any corrupt or falſe Doctrines, not only any, that are contrary to the Scriptures, but any as neceſſary to Salvation, which are not to be proved by the Scriptures; for thus they will be ſure to keep themſelves from any dangerous errors, and continue not only true, but pure believers; and they ſure are not the leſs, but the more in the Unity of the Church, who receive nothing as neceſſary to be beleived in order to Salvation, but what by the undoubted Records of our Chriſtian Faith, appears to have been taught by Chriſt and his Apoſtles.

3. Let every private Chriſtian be moſt careful to obſerve the Commands of our Lord Jeſus in the Government of all his Affections, and all his Actions; for Unity in this thing ought to be amongſt all Chriſtians, ſince without obedience, no man, how qualified ſoever he may be in the Church upon other accounts, ſhall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; *not every one that ſaith, Lord, Lord*; Without this, it is not the being of the one Church, it is not the profeſſing of the *One Faith*, no nor the being of a pure Profeſſion, and a pure Communion, that will unite

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us really and effectually to our Lord Jeſus, the Head of the Church; but we ſhall be cut off from him, as Branches that *bring forth no fruit.*

4. Let him maintain an Univerſal Charity to all Chriſtians, Good will to thoſe that are miſled and ſeduced, in endeavouring to reduce them, as he hath opportunity, in Praying for them, readineſs to be beneficial to all his Brethren, to forgive injuries, and to *overcome evil with good*; compaſſion to the miſerable, pleaſure in that which is for the particular good of any one of his brethren, and much more in what is for the general good of all: Thus he ſhall preſerve himſelf in the other Unity, which is the Duty of the Church, the Unity of Charity and Good will.

5. Let him live in ſtrict Communion with the particular Church whereof he is a Member, in ſubjection to the Authority of it, in obſerving the Rules of it, for the guidance of Religious Aſſemblies, for the ordering of all things that fall under human Authority, (*i.e.*) the Authority of the Lawful Guides of the Church, in order to the Edification and well Governing of it: Thus he ſhall maintain an Unity of Communion with his Brethren and

and his Guides; and ſo in effect with the whole Chriſtian Church, where the Parts of it do as they ought to do; and moſt undoubtedly we are not to be united to any of them in things wherein they do as they ought not.

The Sum of this Advice is eaſie to be underſtood, and to a good man as eaſie to be practiſed. There is no need for him to trouble his own mind with nice and intricate Queſtions about Unity, becauſe he will maintain his part, in order to the Unity of the Church, by doing his plain Duty, by ſticking to the Faith which is profeſſed by all Chriſtians, the Faith into which we were Baptized; by rejecting whatſoever is contrary to the Scriptures, and making them the Rule of his Religious Perſuaſions, which all Chriſtians ought to do; by obſerving the Rules of the Goſpel for the Government of his Life and Actions; in which yet undoubtedly all Churches, and every Member of every Church ought to conſpire; though this part of Unity is hardly remembred, when men talk of the Church; by bearing Chriſtian Affection towards all that *name the name of Chriſt*, whereby he performs the duty of Unity towards them, (which, whether they do or not, they

they ought to perform too). Finally, By frequenting the Service of God in Publick Prayers and Exhortations, in the Adminiſtration of Sacraments, according to the Order of the Church, whereof in particular, the Grace and Providence of God hath made him a Member, and which obſerves the Inſtitutions of our Lord Jeſus in all the Publick Offices of Religion: For thus he performs his part of Unity towards the whole Church, with reſpect to Communion; nor is he, nor can be to blame, if others will not be perſwaded to it.

It is a fond thing to think of ſeeking a True Church, that is the only Church in oppoſition to all others, or to be ſcandalized at the divided State of the Church, which we cannot help, and under a pretence of ſeeking for Unity, to mind nothing elſe. We are to preſerve our ſelves in the Unity of the Church, by profeſſing true Doctrine, and by leading good lives; by a Charitable Spirit and Behaviour towards all Chriſtians; by frequenting Prayers and Sacraments, and ſubmitting to the Authority of our Lawful Guides in all things of Indifference and Prudence; and

and then we may be ſure, that whatever others do, we *keep the unity of the ſpirit in the bond of peace:* And though after all, the Church is not that *One Body* which it would be, if all men did their Duty, yet that we our ſelves are ſuch Members of that One Body, as we ought to be, and as all others ought to be likewiſe.

The

The Eleventh Sermon.

Gen. XV. 16.

But in the fourth generation, they ſhall come hither again; for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.

ABRAHAM was now in the Land of *Canaan*, and this was the third time God had appeared to him, and promiſed him, That his Seed ſhould poſſeſs that Land. In which repetition of the Promiſe, there is this remarkable Circumſtance, That God told him how long it would be, before they ſhould poſſeſs it; and likewiſe mentioned one reaſon why they ſhould poſſeſs it no ſooner: it ſhould be Four hundred years before his Seed ſhould come hither, and not ſooner, becauſe *the iniquity of the Amorites*

morites was not yet full. This was the caſe; That the Seed of *Abraham* could not poſſeſs the Land of *Canaan*, otherwiſe than by diſpoſſeſſing the *Canaanites*: So that the Bounty of God to the *Iſraelites* was likely to prove a terrible Judgment upon the *Canaanites*: But theſe were not grown to that height of Ungodlineſs and Vice, which God uſually puniſhes by Deſtruction in this world; but God foreſeeing that in Four Hundred Years more their ſins would be ripe for vengeance, determined to reprieve them ſo long; and in the mean time, to diſpoſe of the Seed of *Abraham* otherwiſe.

That which I intend to diſcourſe upon, is, the long ſufferance of God in bearing with Mankind, till their Wickedneſs grows intolerable; of which this is a moſt remarkable Inſtance, That altho he might juſtly have deſtroyed the *Amorites* Four hundred Years before they were deſtroyed, yet he gave them ſo long time, and bore with them all the while. Before I proceed to this, I ſhall Premiſe Two Enquiries:

1. What the Iniquity of the *Amorits* was?

2. Whether

2. Whether the only Reaſon why God would not yet put them out of Poſſeſſion, was, That *their iniquity was not yet full?*

1. What was the Iniquity of the *Amorites?* I anſwer, That they were guilty of Idolatry, of Violence, and Abominable Uncleanneſs; for they were for theſe Sins cut off by the Children of *Iſrael*, when they were grown to that height, to which they came in Four hundred Years time. And it is not improbable, that the *Amorites* were at that time, when God appeared to *Abram*, the worſt of all the *Canaanites*, in all theſe reſpects; and therefore that God mentioned them, rather than any of the reſt, as they were afterwards one of the firſt Nations that were deſtroyed, as we read in *Numb.* 21. and that with this particular Remark, That their *ſpirits were hardned*, and *their heart obſtinate*; as you may find, *Deut.* 2. 30.

2. We muſt not ſay, That the only Reaſon why God deferred the Puniſhment of the *Amorites* Four hundred years, was, becauſe *their iniquity was not yet full*; and that becauſe there were other Ends of Providence to be brought about in the time, ſome of

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which are mentioned in this place, *viz.* That the Seed of *Abraham* might in the mean while be proved and tryed by many hardſhips they were to undergo, and thereby inſtructed in their Duty, and prepared for the Land of Promiſe: For thus we find God ſaid to *Abraham*, v. 13. *Know of a ſurety, that thy ſeed ſhall be a ſtranger in a land that is not theirs, and ſhall ſerve them, and they ſhall afflict them four hundred years*; i. e. before the Four hundred Years are expired; and *alſo that nation whom they ſhall ſerve, will I judg; and afterwards they ſhall come out with great ſubſtance: and in the fourth generation they ſhall come hither again, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet full.* Where you ſee, there are more ends than one, for which God would not put the Seed of *Abraham* into a preſent Poſſeſſion of the Promiſed Land; nor do it in haſte neither, partly, becauſe God would ſtill bear with the *Canaanites*; partly, becauſe the *Iſraelites* yet to be born, were to be inſtructed by the variety of Conditions through which they were to go, and be prepared by the diſcipline of Divine Providence, for the obtaining of that Promiſe which was made to *Abraham* and his Seed: And this is the admirable way of God's Providence

vidence in governing and diſpoſing all things, that by the ſame means he brings about ſeveral ends, fitting and accommodating things to one another in that manner, that every event ſeemed to be his particular and only care, while all the reſt were as particularly aimed at, and the means directed to it as certainly as to any one of them. Theſe things ſeemed needful to be premiſed, for the better underſtanding of this place. And now I proceed to the main points of Inſtruction, which are ſuggeſted in the Text, and they are theſe two.

1. The Patience of God, in bearing ſo long as he doth with the Provocations of his Juſtice from wicked men. And,

2. His untaxable Juſtice, in bringing upon them that Puniſhment, at laſt, which their Incurable Obſtinacy deſerves.

For both theſe Obſervations are clearly ſuggeſted by the Text: The ſeed of *Abraham* ſhould not come Four hundred Years, becauſe *the iniquity of the Amorites was not yet full*; but then they ſhould come; the former being, as I ſaid, a great Demonſtration,

1. Of the Patience of God; for the *Amorites* were already faln into the ſins for which they were at laſt cut off; only they were not come to that intolerable height of wickedneſs, to which they were grown in proceſs of time; now all the while they were Examples of God's Patience, becauſe he might juſtly have appeared againſt them to deſtroy them, even at that very time, when he determined to give them yet Four hundred Years to repent and eſcape: No ſooner is Sin committed, but Puniſhment is preſently due; and therefore it is Goodneſs to forbear the inflicting of it the very next moment; but to forbear ſo long a time, is properly Patience and Long-ſufferance; and it is ſuch Patience, as is proper only to him, who is God, and not Man: For the Illuſtration of which, I have two Things to commend to your Conſideration, which will, I doubt not, be uſeful to aſſiſt us in framing worthy and honourable Apprehenſions of God, with reſpect to this matter. The Firſt is,

1. That God never wants Power and Means and Opportunities to be avenged of wicked men.

2. That

2. That he hath always the ſame diſpleaſure againſt, and hatred of ſin; for theſe things put together, do clearly ſhew, That the Patience of God is indeed a Divine Perfection, and infinitely to be praiſed above all that we can imagine of the like quality amongſt men. For,

1. God never wants Power and Means to puniſh his Enemies; and therefore it is in him always Goodneſs to reprieve; and his deferring the Puniſhment, is properly the Patience, which is worthy of Praiſe. When men forbear revenging the Affronts and Injuries that they have received, it is very often, becauſe they wait for an opportunity, which yet they want; they are forced to be content for a while, becauſe they have not Power to Revenge; and for the moſt part they would not tarry, if they had preſent means to eaſe their minds; for this reaſon, we magnify the patience of men moſt of all, when they forgive, whilſt it ſeems that it is in their power, without hurting themſelves, to puniſh the Perſon that hath done them wrong; and we do in ſome meaſure commend thoſe that frame themſelves to Patience, when they have no other help: But this is the peculiar

Character of the Patience of God, That it is as eaſie for him to Puniſh at firſt, as at laſt; and it is never otherwiſe. We can never ſay he forbears ſudden Vengeance, becauſe it would be dangerous, or he wants Power to take it; and we muſt therefore reſolve his Patience into other Cauſes, which are for the Honour of his Goodneſs. It is happy for men in their Concerns with one another, when they, who have moſt Goodneſs, have greateſt Power; and the great Security of Mankind is this, That he only has Almighty Power, who is infinitely good: and this is that which Sinners ſhould acknowledg to the Praiſe of God, That there is no other Being in Heaven or Earth, that can abſolutely and irreſiſtably overwhelm them, but he only, to whoſe Juſtice they are moſt liable, and of whoſe Goodneſs alone it is, that *they are not conſumed*: If God with his Omnipotence were as Man, and ſubject to the Paſſions of men; or if Man with his paſſions were in this reſpect, as God is, and could follow his anger with effect, the race of mankind had long ſince been extinguiſhed; and why it is not ſo, the reaſon is this, Becauſe God only hath Infinite Power, he who is Infinitely Good, and de-

delighteth not in Puniſhment, and *doth not willingly grieve and afflict the Children of men.* This is the firſt way of apprehending the perfect Goodneſs of the Divine Patience, that he doth not reſpite and delay the puniſhment of Sinners at any time for want of Power to take Vengeance of them; for *with God all things are poſſible*; and therefore his forbearance to Puniſh, is always becauſe it is his Will to forbear.

2. God hath always the ſame diſpleaſure againſt Sin, and hates it at one time, as much as at another; and this is alſo a Remarkable Illuſtration of his Patience, and ſhews, that his Forbearance to Puniſh, is purely from his Goodneſs. If we are grieved and offended, the ſenſe of the Injury we have received, is commonly very ſmart at firſt, but it leſſens by degrees; and if the wrong-doer eſcapes our anger, while it is hot within us, he is not in ſo much danger of us afterwards; we are led by paſſion to retaliate evil; and as that cools, we are leſs forward to do it; and in ſuch caſes our forbearance is not properly Patience, becauſe feeling no grief our ſelves, we are not ſo deſirous, that he who once provoked us, ſhould feel it now. But it is not ſo with God;

he is not diſturbed with our uneven paſſions, he abhors ſin, not as if he was a revengeful, but becauſe he is a moſt holy Being; and becauſe he is the ſame Holy God to day, that ever he was; time doth not leſſen his Senſe, nor abate his Hatred of the evil Actions of men: And therefore in him it is all the Goodneſs of Patience to forbear the deſerved inflicting of thoſe Puniſhments, which he could inflict every moment; for he bears with that baſeneſs, which he always hates.

Now ſince it is neither want of Power, nor want of Holineſs, or hatred of Sin, that withholds the Vengeance of Divine Juſtice from falling upon men, till their provocations are grown inſufferable; it muſt be the Wiſe Goodneſs of God, that cauſeth his Patience and Long-ſufferance. And there are ſeveral good effects to which it tendeth indeed; many Reaſons that ſeem to require it.

1. If *ſentence were ſpeedily executed againſt an evil work*, and if it ſeldom happened that a notorious wickedneſs was not forthwith made remarkable by a following vengeance, there would be a little ſpace left for Repentance: But God would *have all men to repent, and to come to the knowledg of the truth.* And he *is long-*

long-ſuffering to usward, not willing that any ſhould periſh, but that all ſhould come to repentance. God's forbearance is neceſſary, that there might be room for other proper means to bring us to amendment; he doth not cut us off, even when we provoke him daily, becauſe he would prevent that laſt Sentence by other remedies, by gentle Admonitions, and ſometimes by ſharp Corrections, or by making others, that are grown incurable, the examples of his Juſtice, and by variety of inſtructing Providences, if by any means we can be perſwaded to our duty. Should God proceed to deſtroy, upon every grievous ſin that is committed, as in Juſtice he might, then alas! our Eternal Salvation, which depends upon what we do in this ſhort Life, would by one ſingle act become almoſt deſperate, and we ſhould have but one tryal in this life, in order to our Everlaſting State: But how many have we had! and here is the Goodneſs of God, that altho by wretched men he is provoked day after day, yet he bears with them day after day, not being willing that they ſhould periſh; for *he is the Lord, the Lord God gracious and merciful, ſlow to anger, and of great compaſſion.*

2. If God were always ſudden in his Juſtice, and ſhould cruſh every wickedneſs with his hand, as ſoon as ever it appeared in the world; this proceeding would bear ſomething hard upon the Liberty of Human Nature, and be too great a force upon us; and it would not be eaſily ſeen, whether we chuſe to do what God commands freely and heartily, or merely upon the conſtraint of a ſervile Fear. God made us to ſerve him upon ingenuous and manly Principles, and hath therefore given us a ſenſe of his Preſence, and of his Providence, with the Knowledg of his Will, and the Expectation of being rewarded or puniſhed hereafter: But if upon every notorious offence the Malefactor was made an example of notable Vengeance, the perpetual obſervation of this would be like a *Flaming Sword* hanging over every man's head, and keeping him in a perpetual Apprehenſion of preſent Deſtruction, if he ſhould ſtep aſide; which would indeed be a way to keep men from being very bad, but not to make them truly Good; their avoiding Vice, would be like the Honeſty of a Man, that doth not Steal, becauſe his hands are always manacled.

3. If

3. If God doth not ſuffer men to Degenerate exceedingly in their Principles and Practices, and to grow from bad to worſe, but ſtill cruſhed all Impoſtures; and diſcountenanced all Villany and Hypocriſie at it's firſt ſetting out in the World, where would be the Patience and Faith of the Saints, of thoſe that believe in God, and take his Word for their Rule and their Comfort, and live in the Expectation of his Promiſes? But when Iniquity grows and thrives, and can plead Preſcription, and Authority; when it hath ſtood long enough to have ſome Colour for *Antiquity*, and hath obtained intereſt enough to pretend to a kind of *Univerſality*, then it will be ſeen, who they are that love God, and Truth, and Goodneſs, that are not willing to be deceived, that will take pains to be rightly informed; That prefer Truth before Glorious Names, and a good Conſcience before Applauſe and Flattery, and Eternal Life before the Eaſe and Pleaſures of this World. God bears long with all the Provocations of Mankind, for the ſame reaſon, that he permits *Hereſies*, which is, that they, who are approved, may be made manifeſt.

For theſe, and ſuch like reaſons as theſe

theſe, God in his Wiſdom and Goodneſs bears with Infinite Patience thoſe Provocations for a long time together, which he could be avenged of in a Moment, and which he utterly abominates; which was the firſt Obſervation upon the Text.

2. The ſecond was, That God is ſo much the more juſt in the final deſtruction of Incurable and Obſtinate Sinners, when *their iniquity is full* and ripe for Vengeance: For as there was the Patience of God ſeen for four hundred Years together, while the Iniquity of the *Amorites* was growing from bad to worſe; ſo at the end of that Period, the Juſtice of God was ſeen, when *their Iniquity was full.* To grow worſe for the forbearance of God, is the moſt Criminal Preſumption in the World; and when men are come to that paſs, as quite to forget, that there is a God, or believing him to be; to perſuade themſelves, That he either approves, or at leaſt connives at their Impieties; then the ſame Wiſdom, and Goodneſs, which hitherto had kept off their Puniſhments, will bring them on ſwiftly and ſuddenly; for as on the one ſide, if the degeneracy, and the impudence of Sinners ſhould not be ſuffered to Flouriſh long, there will be

no

no Tryal of the Faith of Honeſt men; ſo if it ſhould be ſuffered to laſt always, the Temptation would at length grow too hard for them. God exerciſes his own Patience, that Good men might exerciſe theirs; at length he ſhows his juſtice, to reward their Patience: The Patience of God is a forbearance guided by Wiſdom and Goodneſs; and the Juſtice of God is a Severity, that is alſo guided by Wiſdom and Goodneſs: And neither the one, nor the other, hath any mixture of that Selfiſhneſs, and Paſſion, which is for the moſt part the reaſon, why we ſometimes are, and ſometimes are not, ſevere with thoſe that have offended us. This is the true Juſtice of Puniſhment, to reſpect the Evil that is committed, and to Puniſh for that reaſon; and this appears in no inſtances more, than when God Puniſhes after long ſparing; For if he had been a Selfiſh, or a Paſſionate Being, he had never ſuffered men to go on ſo long together in the moſt Provoking ways of Wickedneſs, becauſe he had it in his Power to Puniſh them long before, as he Puniſhes them at laſt; And therefore that he Puniſhes them at laſt, is an effect of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs, and a Demon-

monſtration, that the Common good required it: And as there are ſeveral good ends, to which God's Patience tends, in bearing with general Impieties, ſo long as he often doth; ſo there are as many to which his Juſtice tends in taking Vengeance of them at laſt: For,

1. This is a Demonſtration that his Providence was not aſleep before.

2. It is a clear inſtruction, that men ought not to preſume upon God's Favour, merely becauſe they Proſper in their ways; but that they ſhould meaſure his Love, or his Anger, by what they do, and not by what happens to them; ſince they who do the ſame wicked things, may go Unpuniſhed from one Generation to Another; and in this World, but one Generation may ſuffer for them.

3. That we ſhould not forget to call our paſt Sins to remembrance, and to humble our ſelves before God for them; ſince if God Puniſhes *the ſins of the Fathers upon the Children* in this Life, the like cauſe have we to fear, that he will Puniſh the Sins of our Youth, and our Riper Years, at the Latter end of our Life.

4. That we ſhould make uſe of the Pati-

Patience and long ſuffering of God to our ſelves, to prevent his Anger from Flaming out againſt us, becauſe otherwiſe we *Treaſure up Wrath againſt the day of Wrath, and revelation of the righteous Judgment of God.*

The truth is, theſe are the uſes we ought to make of both thoſe Conſiderations that I laid before you from the Text, which I ſhall therefore inculcate again. And,

1. We have no reaſon to queſtion either the watchfulneſs of God's Providence, or to be caſt into perplexities and doubts, whether the way of Truth, and the way of Error, the way of Virtue and Piety, and the way of Hypocriſie and Wickedneſs are ſo different from one another, as is pretended in Religion; we have, I ſay, no reaſon to perplex our ſelves about theſe things, becauſe for many Generations God hath ſuffered Deceit and Violence to prevail, to ſpread and to flouriſh in the World; for *God is not as a man, his ways are above our ways, and his thoughts above our thoughts*: when we look abroad into the World, and look back upon ſo many paſt Ages, wherein Religion hath been made a formal Pretence for the Eſtabliſhing of a Worldly

Greatneſs and Dominion upon Groſs and Palpable Errors, ſupported by Fraud and Force, it is fooliſhly done of us to diſquiet our ſelves with doubts whether we are in the way of the Truth or not, ſince it pleaſed God for ſo long a Time to ſuffer the contrary to prevail mightily in the World, and for ſome Ages to baffle all oppoſition. For this is to ſuppoſe God to be ſuch a one as our ſelves, impatient of high Indignities and great Provocations, ready to kindle upon any notable affront, or however unable to bear repeated, and long continued injuries. No doubt if our opinion had been aſked, the Luxury of the old World ſhould have been mortified by ſome amazing Judgments, and the Flood ſhould have been ſpared, the Idolatry of the new Race of Mankind had been prevented, or at leaſt by ſome Irreſiſtible Evidence of God's diſpleaſure baniſhed, long before the Coming of Chriſt; and *Mahomet* ſhould either have never appeared, or he ſhould have Glared only like a Comet, and ſo gone out, inſtead of founding ſo vaſt, and ſo long an Empire, as it ſeems he has done. But let us leave God to rule the World, and be content that he ſhould Rule us; we are too Angry,

gry, and too Paſſionate to ſay, how things ſhould have been, and never more fooliſh, than when we would from God's Providences make concluſions contrary to his Word. It is not for us to ſay, what the God of Wiſdom, the God of Patience, the God of Juſtice, and of Goodneſs, and of Infinite Power, ſhould do. It is the leaſt Honour we can give him, to allow every thing to be beſt, which he doth in the World; every thing to be born with Patience, that he permits; every thing to be done with Faith, and confidence in him, that he commandeth; and that, as we cannot mend his Word, ſo neither can we mend his Works, but be content, as we have juſt reaſon, to do the one, and ſubmit to the other.

2. No Sinner hath reaſon to preſume upon the Patience of God, or to conclude, That *the wrath of God doth not abide upon him*, becauſe he hath proſpered long in an Evil way, and no great Evil hath happened to him. He ought to remember, That God is not ſubject to the Paſſions of men, and doth not ſerve us, as we are too apt to ſerve one another; and as we do, when upon every great Provocation we expreſs a ſharp Reſent-

ment: God's Puniſhments are not leſs certain, becauſe they are more ſlow, than ours. They are not the leſs certain, becauſe they are not inflicted in Paſſion, but the more certain: He that Puniſhes, when Wiſdom and Goodneſs requires ſeverity, Puniſhes more certainly, than he that Puniſhes but only as he is led by Sudden and Paſſionate Anger. If therefore thou art Conſcious to thy ſelf of deeds highly Worthy of Puniſhment, think of God's Patience, and let the Thought of his Patience work a more reaſonable effect in thee, than what is the common effect of it; let not his Patience make thee ſecure, but let it make thee Fear, and go away, and Humble thy ſelf before him, if peradventure thy Repentance may keep off that Puniſhment for the Future, which his Patience hath kept off hitherto. For,

3. That which we have been ſpeaking of being conſidered, there is very great reaſon for us to humble our ſelves before God for our ſins, that have been long ſince committed; and that the more, if God hath not yet thought fit to chaſtiſe us for them; for there is the more cauſe to apprehend that he will do ſo. I have already obſerved that *God's thoughts are*

not

not as our thoughts are; and there is this notable inſtance of it, wherein we are nearly concerned: When we commit any wickedneſs, the thought of it is Troubleſome and Grievous to us for the preſent, unleſs we have caſt off all ſenſe of God, and care of our own Souls; but by degrees it wears off; and that which a few days ſince lay heavy upon our minds, is now grown ſo light that we do not feel it; and ſo the next Sin that wounds our Conſcience is felt, perhaps, as the former was, and forgotten at laſt, as it was too; and thus we are naturally diſpoſed, not to have the ſame ſenſe of Sins long ago committed, as of guilt we have lately contracted: But this is an infirmity that is to be corrected by Reaſon, and a right Knowledg of God: For it is not ſo with God; the Evil which thou didſt Twenty Years ago, is as freſh in his Remembrance, and lies before him as much to thy diſadvantage, as that which was done but Yeſterday. God's diſpleaſure doth not wear off, as our Trouble doth, though becauſe we are not affected with the Vile Actions that were done a great while ſince, we are apt to flatter our ſelves, that neither is he ſo angry with us, as he was: We behave our ſelves too

often, as if we were accountable for none but the laſt Sins we committed; we do evil things, and cry God Mercy; and then we do them again, and go on in this way, as if nothing were upon the ſcore againſt us, but what troubles us for the preſent. But we ſhould argue quite contrary. God hath all our Wicked Actions in order before him, and therefore we ſhould ſet them before our own Eyes, and remember, that if we have had our profits without Loſſes; and our Pleaſures without Pains, our Sins without Puniſhments, there is the more behind; and that we are as much in danger of the Sins of our Youth, and all the ills we have done ſince, as of the lateſt of all; for which reaſon we ſhould ſay, *Spare us good Lord*; and from the bottom of our Hearts ſhould confeſs and be ſorry for our former offences, and fear and tremble to add new ones to them: And that is the concluſion we are to make of the whole matter; to wit,

4. To uſe the Patience and Long-ſuffering of God for the Preventing of his Anger from Flaming out againſt us, either in this World, or in the World to come; and that by *bringing forth fruits*

meet for repentance, and doing remarkably well in all thoſe kinds, wherein we have formerly done Evil; remembring thoſe words of the Apoſtle, *Rom.* 2. 4. *Deſpiſeſt thou the riches of his goodneſs, and forbearance, and long-ſuffering, not knowing that the Goodneſs of God leadeth thee to repentance.* Where the Apoſtle ſeems to intimate, that this is a matter which men are ignorant of, or at leaſt, that they mind it not, *viz.* that *the goodneſs of God leadeth them to repentance,* (*i. e.*) the goodneſs of his Forbearance and Long-ſuffering. We are all of us ſenſible, that his threatnings do naturally lead men to thoughts of amendment; but we are not ſo well aware, that his forbearance was deſigned for the ſame end; though when we come to conſider, it is what we ſhall not be able to deny: For as the reaſon why God threatens, is becauſe he would have the Puniſhment avoided, ſince he that threatens before-hand, doth it, that there may be no occaſion of Puniſhment; ſo the reaſon why the threatning is not inflicted preſently, is the very ſame, eſpecially when it is declared expreſly, that Repentance will be admitted: I ſay the reaſon of the forbearance is the ve-

ry ſame, *viz.* That we might have time to Repent, and means to eſcape: Which uſe of God's forbearance, as it is neceſſary for our Salvation in the World to come, ſo it is the beſt means of our eſcaping in this; although that be a concern for which we ought not in any meaſure to be ſo Solicitous, as for the other. When bad men grow worſe and worſe, it is a ſign that God will viſit the World, and no longer bear the Indignities that are done to his Holy Name: and therefore the ſecurity of good men muſt lie in the growing better and better. When God's Patience and Forbearance is extended to all alike, and ſome are incurable, and grow hardned by it, and others frame themſelves to Piety, and Charity, and Dependance upon God more than ever they did before, it is highly probable, that when he finds ſo great a difference, he will make as great a difference; and for a general inſtruction, make it plain on both ſides, that he will neither fail to Puniſh the Wicked, nor to Protect the Righteous.

Brethren, let us remember our Profeſſion, which is to believe in God, and conſequently to believe, that we are not made ſafe by Wealth, or by Favour, by

by Worldly Power, or by Worldly Policy; but that God is more to us, than all theſe things; and that we depend intirely upon him; that by forſaking him, we forſake our ſtrength and defence; that by adhering to him, we have that Power for our Security, and that Goodneſs for our Security, which made the World, and which Governs the World. Let us then *in this our day conſider the things that belong to our peace*, and *ſeek the Lord while he may be found, and call upon him while he is near*, that he may be near unto us in all our Troubles and Adverſities, whenſoever they oppreſs us, and be found of us at the hour of Death, and the day of Judgment; that God of Mercy and Love, which in himſelf he always is, and which he deſires to ſhow himſelf to be to us all. *Let* therefore *the unrighteous man forſake his ways, and the wicked man his thoughts; and turn unto the Lord, for he will have mercy upon him, and to our God, for he will abundantly Pardon.* To the God of Infinite Goodneſs let us aſcribe all Honour and Glory, now and for ever. Amen.

The Twelfth Sermon.

Luke XIII. 5.

I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.

CONCERNING *the* Galileans, *whoſe Blood* Pilate *mingled with their Sacrifices*, and *the Eighteen* Jews *upon whom the Tower in* Siloam *fell and ſlew them*, our Saviour's diſcourſe to thoſe that were preſent was this. *Suppoſe ye, that theſe* Galileans, *and theſe Jews were Sinners above all the Galileans, becauſe they ſuffered ſuch things; and above all men that dwelt at Jeruſalem? I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*

From which words taken in Connexion with what went before, there are two

kinds of Obſervations that may be laid down: The former are rather ſuppoſed than expreſſed; and they are theſe Two,

1. That God is Juſt in the Puniſhments that he inflicts upon Sinners.

2. That by what means ſoever, evil happens to men, the Providence of God is concerned in it.

The Second Kind are intended more directly, *viz.*

1. That they who ſuffer very great Evils, are not always greater Sinners than thoſe who in the mean time ſuffer nothing.

2. That one Reaſon why ſuch evils do not befal all Perſons at the ſame time, who are equally Sinners, is, That while ſome are viſited with the Rod, others may take warning by it. And

3. That if they do not take warning, they ſhall not eſcape.

Theſe are all profitable Inſtructions, and ſuch as this Place naturally yields; which I ſhall therefore purſue, without taking much pains to ſhew how they are contained in it.

Something I ſhall ſay, but very briefly, of the Two Firſt, becauſe they are ſup-

ſuppoſed in theſe Sayings of our Lord, though not the main Things intended:

The Firſt is, That Puniſhment is due to Sin; which is the Ground of all that our Saviour diſcourſes here, concerning the ends of thoſe unhappy men; he knew that his Hearers would be apt to paſs an hard Cenſure upon them, and he took care to prevent it; but they would never have been in danger of running into that extreme, if it had not been fixed in all of them, That Puniſhment was due to Sin; and this our Saviour was far from correcting, but rather confirmed them in it, by concluding, That they alſo ſhould *periſh, except they repented.* The truth is, this is one of thoſe things, that men know by Nature; and it is well that they do; for if notwithſtanding this ſenſe, the World is ſo bad, how much worſe would it have been, if theſe apprehenſions could have been extinguiſhed? Hence it is, that the Conſcience of well-doing inſpires a man with aſſurance; and that Guilt makes him a Coward; That the diſaſters of others expoſe them to be hardly thought of; and that our own Afflictions bring our own Sins to remembrance. The Natives of *Meli-*

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ta, though they were *Barbarians*, yet when they *saw a Viper fasten upon St. Paul's hand*, presently concluded, That he *was a murderer, whom though he had escaped the Sea, yet vengeance would not suffer to live*, Acts 28. There the natural Sense of Punishment being due to Sin, wrought, though they carried it too far: But with something better reason did *Joseph*'s Brethren, when he had brought them into distress, argue with one another, *Verily, we are guilty concerning our Brother, therefore this distress is come upon us*, Gen. 42. 21. It is this natural belief, that supported many Mysteries of Religion every where, in all Ages of the world, whether those Mysteries were of God's appointing, or of Man's inventing. A good part of the Sacrifices and Rites of the Heathens, and the *Jews*, in their Worship, was to make expiation of Sin; and the Beast was killed, to confess that Punishment was due to that man for whom it was offered: It is this Sense that dispose men to believe strange Delusions; that there is virtue in little things, which seem to be no better than Charms to take away the guilt of Sin, and to prevent the Punishment of it: When people *wear Habits*, and *go Pilgrimages*,

mages, and *touch Relicks*, and apply *Holy Water*; and twenty other ſuch Remedies to themſelves, for the eaſe of their minds, tho they take a ſilly way to their end, yet the Principle is good at the bottom, That Sin and Puniſhment are linked together, and that one naturally draws on the other, if ſome method be not uſed to break the chain; which belief is ſo troubleſome to a guilty mind, that for this reaſon, the generality of men are naturally diſpoſed to like a Religion ſo much the more, for having great variety of Reliefs for an uneaſie Conſcience; which is the true reaſon why mankind, if good care be not taken, are ready to run into a thouſand Superſtitions: To prevent which, and to bring us into the way of Salvation, God ſent his own Son into the World to be a Sacrifice for us, that we having ſo great an aſſurance of the expiation of our ſins, ſhould chearfully ſet our ſelves to the Reformation of our Hearts and Lives, and *ſerve God without fear, in holineſs and righteouſneſs before him all the days of our life.* This is the firſt Obſervation, That the Principle upon which all this Diſcourſe proceeds, is a natural Truth, *viz.* That Puniſhment is due to Sin.

2. That

2. That by what means ſoever evils befal men, it ſtill comes by the Providence of God, either directly ſending it, or at leaſt knowingly permitting it, and for wiſe and good Reaſons determining to permit it: This alſo is evidently preſumed in this Diſcourſe; for upon the relation of thoſe diſaſters, the minds of the Hearers preſently turned to this Concluſion, That they were very great Sinners that ſuffered ſuch things, and conſequently, that the evil was ſent by a Juſt and Wiſe Providence: Now this our Saviour did not go about to correct neither, but rather confirmed them in it, that God's hand was in all that happened, as themſelves ſhould find it too, if they repented not: So that whether evil comes by the free will of others, as it did upon *the Galileans, whoſe blood Pilate mingled with their Sacrifices*, or by ſuch means as ſeem to be merely caſual, as it did upon *the eighteen upon whom the Tower in Siloam fell*; in both caſes, the Providence of God doth interpoſe, attending the whole Affair, regulating, and ordering, and with exact knowledg of each circumſtance, permitting that which happens, and the means by which it happens: A very inſtructing Conſideration, which we

we ſhould lay up in our minds, heartily believing it, and frequently entertaining our ſelves with it, that we may be directed by it in our Proſperity, and comforted with it in our Adverſity; for it will give us in our better ſtate, the beſt direction how to ſecure it; and to all other methods and ways which we uſe to keep off evil, it will make us add that which is beſt of all, to ſecure by well-doing an intereſt in the Favour of God. It is a great defect of Wiſdom, as well as of True Religion, to be ſo nice as we often are, in weighing the means of our welfare, with the cauſes of danger; and this with reſpect only to ſecond cauſes; forgetting all the while, that which ought in the firſt and chiefeſt place to be remembred, the Supreme Mover and Orderer even of thoſe Cauſes, and of the whole matter. But if we laid to heart what we all believe, that it is an unſeen hand that governs all, undoubtedly we ſhould be more afraid of our ſins, than of all other miſeries; and more concerned to be ſtrong in the Favour of *God*, than in the *Arm of Fleſh*. This Conſideration is equally good to comfort us under Adverſity, if that happens, becauſe God ſends it; for tho there may be good

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reason to take evil in evil part, from men who seldom mean well to us, when they trouble and grieve us; yet there is this to make us patient, that it is of God's sending too, who means us no harm, and will convert it to good, which is the true reason of that excellent saying of *Job*, ch. 2. v. 10. *Shall we receive good from the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?* For the Emphasis lies in these Words, *From the hand of God*. For we rank him in effect with men, if we cannot be pleased with him, but when he gives us what we desire: When good comes to us, it is welcome from what hand soever it comes; but this is one part of the singular Worship we pay to God, that from him we can receive evil too, without suspecting either the Goodness of his Intention, or the Wisdom of his Counsel.

These are the Two Points which lye at the bottom of this Discourse of our Saviour, *viz.* That Punishment belongs to Sin; and, That the Evils which happen in this World, do not happen without the Providence of God attending upon all the Circumstances thereof.

I proceed now to those Points which are the direct purpose of this place; whereof the

1. Is,

1. Is, That they who ſuffer very great Evils, are not always greater Sinners than thoſe who in the mean time ſuffer nothing: That is the plain Doctrine of our Saviour, expreſſed in theſe Queſtions, *Suppoſe ye that theſe were greater ſinners, than all the Galileans? and theſe, than all that dwell at Jeruſalem?* They indeed that heard him, being *Jews*, were ready enough ſo to ſuppoſe; but this was that Error of theirs, which he in the firſt place deſigned to correct; and it was neceſſary for them to be ſet right in this matter by ſome great Authority, becauſe it was an Error ſo eaſie for them to ſlide into, by reaſon of the Temper and Conſtitution of their Law, which to them that kept it, promiſed all the good things of this Life, and threatned all the evils of Life to them that broke it: But the time was now coming, when theſe Conſiderations ſhould not be ſo much regarded, and God would eſtabliſh a Covenant upon promiſes of an higher nature than thoſe of the Law of *Moſes*, and upon more terrible penalties than were threatned by that Law: And therefore this plain Doctrine of our Saviour, which no doubt was ſomething ſurprizing to his Hearers, was very ſeaſonable to be delivered,

livered, just when that Law was expiring, and a better was to take place: The time was coming when *all that would live godly in Christ Jesus should suffer Persecution*; when his Disciples should be *hated of all men for his names sake*, and *deliver'd up to be beaten* and *scourged*, and *put to death*; Which when they should see, they would have reason to remember that he had told them, upon a particular occasion, that they were not to call them the greatest Sinners, who suffered such things, as so many together never endured before; but there was a notorious Provocation of Divine Justice to deserve it. Now there were greater designs in hand, than to keep a small Nation, in comparison, to the observation of a Law, that required abundance of Ceremony, and was content with the outward work, which served to an happy Life in this World. The true rules of Righteousness and Charity were now to be laid down, and men were to learn to live above the World, and to be brought to the Practice of Piety, by the promises of Immortality in a future State; to reward them for any thing they should lose or suffer for it, in this: It would therefore be expedient, that the power of this Faith should

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be ſometimes demonſtrated, to the Glory of God, and the Inſtruction of Man, and that by examples of conſtancy in ſuffering for Righteouſneſs; it would alſo be expedient, that the Profeſſion of ſo holy a Faith ſhould not be diſhonoured by the continual ſcandals of men, whoſe Converſation is quite contrary to their Profeſſion; and therefore that God ſhould purify his Church in the Furnace of Affliction, and ſometimes ſeparate the Sincere from the Hypocrite, by bringing them to the Teſt of Perſecution, that thoſe who hang looſely upon the Chriſtian Communion, might be ſhaken off, and none but good examples left in it, to bring greater Credit to the Goſpel, and more Proſelytes to it, than it had before. Since therefore the Time was coming, when men ſhould ſuffer not at all, as Sinners or Evil doers, but for a good Cauſe, and with a good Conſcience, moſt certainly it was a ſeaſonable Inſtruction, that the greateſt Sufferers were not to be accounted the greateſt Sinners.

But this, I confeſs, is a Reaſon that doth not reach the full intention of our Saviour, in the Doctrine he laid down upon this occaſion mentioned in the

Text; for his true Diſciples in ſuffering for their Faith and Profeſſion, cannot be ſaid to ſuffer for their Sins; but his words conſidered with all the circumſtances wherewith they are to be taken, do ſuppoſe that when men ſuffer for their ſins, they are not to be accounted greater ſinners merely for that reaſon, than thoſe who at the ſame time eſcape, and ſuffer nothing; for when he ſaid, that neither ſhould they eſcape that heard him, unleſs they repented; it was implied, or at leaſt not denied, that thoſe things happened to the aforeſaid *Galileans* and *Jews* as a Puniſhment of their Sins; and a plain caſe it is, that in this Life where *the Tares and the Wheat grow together*, that by the ſame Afflictions, God puniſhes the Sins of ſome, while he manifeſts the Sincerity of others; and in this caſe it remains true, that thoſe who are puniſhed, are not to be accounted greater ſinners than all thoſe that eſcape; of which we need not deſire any other proof than our Saviour's word for it: But in ſome caſes we have very evident and ſenſible demonſtration of it: For ſometimes God puniſhes the ſins of ſome men by the hands of others that are worſe than they, whom he reſerves for far greater Puniſhments in

Life, as the Hiſtories of the Church do abundantly teſtifie: Now by the ſame reaſon, that it muſt not be concluded of thoſe that ſuffer under the oppreſſions of others, that they are worſe than thoſe that oppreſs them, it ought not neither to be concluded of thoſe that do not ſuffer by them, that they are better than thoſe that do; for the former obſervation is an evident proof that they do not ſuffer firſt, who deſerve it moſt. Which is a Doctrine that our Saviour thought fit to deliver in his days, and will be of conſtant uſe, while the World laſts, to keep Chriſtians at the greateſt diſtance from that Jewiſh Error, That men may diſcern God's Love and Hatred by what befalls them in this World. I will therefore never ſuffer my ſelf to be run into an ill opinion of any man, or any people, by any adverſity, how great ſoever it be, which happens to them before my eyes; much leſs will I enter into compariſons; I will not conclude from the Affliction I ſee, that there muſt needs be ſome great ſin at the bottom, which Vengeance has found out: And when I ſee the ſin, and cannot forbear acknowledging the juſtice of God, I will not go on to ſuppoſe, there is ſomething more

than I do ſee, and make him to be a worſe man than he ſeems to be; nor will I conclude, that he is worſe than thoſe, that do not ſuffer ſuch things: And what conſtruction I will forbear to make of a ſingle Perſon, I will much more forbear to make of Multitudes: Becauſe I know the reaſons of God's Proceedings with Peoples and Nations, and great bodies of men, are by me unſearcheable, and that time diſcovers that Wiſdom of his Counſels, which my reaſon cannot fathom: In a word, I will conclude ill of none, becauſe they ſuffer, but rather well of them, if I know no cauſe to the contrary, becauſe it is often God's method to afflict his own beſt Servants, and when he Puniſhes for Sin, to begin with thoſe that do not moſt of all deſerve it. Shall I conclude, for inſtance, that the *French* Proteſtants have been the greateſt Sinners of all the Proteſtants in *Europe*, or greater than our ſelves, becauſe they have ſuffered ſuch things? God forbid! I ſpeak not of thoſe, who to their Glory in this World, but alas, that is little worth, it becomes me to ſay, and you to hear it, who to their Praiſe with God, and to the encreaſe of their reward hereafter in a better Life, have ſuffered the loſs of all things,

things, to keep a good Conſcience: but of thoſe whom the Terrors of this World have prevailed with, more than the *Terrors of the Lord*; in whom the deſire of eaſe here, hath been too hard for the deſire of Salvation hereafter; I will not ſay, and we muſt not ſay, that even theſe were greater Sinners than our ſelves, who have not fallen into their Temptations. Such inſtances as theſe, Brethren, do beſt explain the intention of our Saviour in theſe words, and will affect us with the true ſenſe of them; and the more that we look abroad into the World, and conſider the unſearchableneſs of God's Judgments, and that *his ways are paſt finding out*, as we cannot but do, if we ask our ſelves the reaſon why this and that happens; the more ſenſibly we ſhall acknowledg the Truth of our Saviour's Doctrine in this place, and ſhall forbear paſſing Judgment upon the unhappy, merely becauſe they are ſo. But yet to take notice of what God doth of this kind in the World, is not an unprofitable obſervation, and that becauſe the ſecond point of the three, which I have mentioned, is as true as the firſt, and that is this.

2. That one reaſon, why the Evils of this Life do not befall all Perſons at the

ſame time, who are equally Sinners, is, That while ſome are viſited with the Rod of God, others may take warning by it: This Propoſition I lay down with great confidence, not only of the Truth of it in general, but alſo of the pertinence of it to the Text: For you may obſerve, that our Saviour upon mention made of the former of the Two Tragical Stories, obſerves the latter himſelf, and takes occaſion from thence to divert his hearers from cenſuring thoſe miſerable Perſons, as they were ready to do, and to imploy them in reflecting upon themſelves: *I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*: he imployed them in reflecting upon their own ſins; for ſays he, *except ye repent*; and upon their own danger, *except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.* And now I am ſure it will be granted, that our Saviour did not wander from the true intent of God's Providence in the things that happened to thoſe perſons, nor make an application of them, which was not to the purpoſe; and therefore ſince he gave warning by their examples, it remains true, as I ſaid, that one reaſon why the Evils of this Life do not befall all Perſons at the ſame time who equally deſerve them, and I will add,

add, who equally need them, is this, That while ſome are corrected, others may be inſtructed: I rather keep to the caſe of Puniſhing Sin, than trying Virtue, becauſe that is the caſe of the Text; though I might ſay too, That the reaſon why all that can bear a tryal, are not tryed at the ſame time is, becauſe the tryals of ſome righteous men are not only profitable to themſelves, but the examples of them alſo are profitable to other good men to encourage and fortifie them. But when God puniſhes, he doth not at one and the ſame Time, puniſh all that deſerve it equally, but he puniſhes ſome, that the reſt may take warning; For if the ſufferings of a Few in compariſon, would inſtruct all the reſt, God's end is gained, which is, that we ſhould *learn righteouſneſs, when his judgments are abroad in the Earth*: And this is one of thoſe arguments which may convince us, that *God doth not willingly afflict and grieve the Children of Men*; for if he took pleaſure in that, then without queſtion where there was the ſame cauſe, there would be the ſame effect of his diſpleaſure; and where the ſame need appeared, the ſame remedy would be uſed; but if where all might juſtly be puniſhed, he uſes his Pre-

rogative to puniſh ſome only, and for the time ſpares the reſt, to prove and try them whether the examples of his Juſtice upon others will bring them to Repentance; in this caſe it plainly appears, that he delights not in that which is grievous to us, but would bring us to Repentance at the ſame time, by ſhewing his Juſtice upon ſome, and his Patience towards others. We can indeed give no account why God begins to afflict this man, and not that; this People, and not another; but the general point is very obvious (*i. e.*) why all are not made to ſuffer together, where there is the ſame Provocation of Divine Juſtice, and the ſame need of being awakened to Repentance; for the reaſon of it, is this, That the Puniſhment of ſome is a ſufficient warning to others; and God does not afflict all at once, becauſe he doth not willingly afflict the Children of Men: For mark our Saviour's arguing in this place: There were among the *Galileans* as great Sinners, as thoſe whoſe Blood *Pilate* mingled with their Sacrifices; There were among the Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem*, as great Sinners, as thoſe were upon whom the Tower of *Siloam* fell; and yet thoſe calamities happened but to a

few;

few; The uſe that he would have the reſt make of thoſe Examples, was this, That they ſhould repent; which he urged by this threatning, *except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*: Now he that threatens to puniſh and has power to do it, doth plainly ſhow, that he takes no delight in Puniſhing, but would prevent the fault that deſerves it; eſpecially, when he threatens and ſhews Examples of Juſtice at the ſame time, and might have made thoſe Examples of his Juſtice too, whom he threatens. And ſo I proceed to the third Propoſition, which is,

3. That if thoſe who eſcape from the Puniſhment, do not take warning by thoſe that ſuffer, themſelves ſhall not always Eſcape; and this is the direct purport of the Words, *I tell you, Nay: but except ye repent ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh*; and that by *Periſhing* here, our Lord meant the Puniſhments of this Life, is plain from hence, that he threatned ſuch like deſtruction, as happened to thoſe few *Galileans*, and thoſe few upon whom the Tower of *Siloam* fell. Ye ſhall all *likewiſe* Periſh, (*i.e.*) much after the ſame manner, as indeed it happened, and that to admiration; For as the Blood of thoſe *Galileans* was mingled with their Sacrifices;

fices; ſo was the Blood of the *Jews* mingled with the Blood of thoſe Paſchal Sacrifices, which they came to offer juſt before the *Roman* Army hemm'd them in; and as thoſe eighteen were killed by the fall of the Tower of *Siloam*, ſo were the Inhabitants of *Jeruſalem* deſtroyed in the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* it ſelf. Although the Covenant of the Goſpel was eſtabliſhed upon better promiſes, and with more frightful Penalties, than thoſe of this World; yet the Providence of God doth not neglect the bringing men to Repentance by the Good and Evil of this Life; nay it is neceſſary to the maintaining a ſenſe of God, and a World to come, even amongſt Chriſtians, That his diſpleaſure ſhould be ſeen, where his goodneſs doth not *lead to repentance*; and it is his goodneſs, that by his Judgments he doth awaken us, when nothing elſe is able to do it. And therefore although the great motives of Chriſtianity are thoſe that concern another Life; yet when theſe do not prevail, the only remedy that is left, is to inſtruct us by preſent corrections, and to touch us in thoſe things, of which we are moſt ſenſible, *viz.* The preſent concerns of this World. If therefore, after he hath made ſome examples

amples to others, theſe do not Repent, it is ſtill more neceſſary that they ſhould not eſcape, becauſe they have abuſed the long-ſuffering of God towards themſelves, and taken no warning by thoſe, whom God Chaſtened, while he ſpared them: For if their obſtinacy ſhould go without Puniſhment, the example of their Impunity would do more hurt to ſucceeding Generations, than if there had been no warnings given at all; and for this reaſon, the ſufferings of thoſe Sinners that were made the firſt examples, are commonly leſs than theirs, that would learn no inſtruction by them, as it hapned to the *Jews* 40 years after this warning that our Saviour gave them, upon ſo inſtructing an ocaſion.

The uſe we are to make of theſe conſiderations, is, To do the ſame thing, which we ſhould certainly do, if God's Judgments were upon us, as they are upon others, that we alſo periſh not: For if we would *judge our ſelves, we ſhould not be judged*; and if the warning that God gives us by others, hath the ſame effect, that Correction it ſelf would have upon us, God, who doth not willingly grieve the Children of Men, would ſpare us, and not *enter into Judgment* with us. It is but conſidering how we ſhould be diſpoſed

poſed by great affliction and bringing our minds to that temper without it, and then the great deſign of Divine Corrections and Puniſhments is attained without Puniſhment. And how are men wrought upon by Calamities? excepting ſome few, who are ſuch wretches as *Ahab* was, *who in his diſtreſs ſinned yet more and more.* Theſe are the common effects: In general, they begin then to call their ſins to mind, and their Conſciences bring forth the guilt, that hath been for the moſt part quiet, and do ſet their evil ways in order before them: Nay, then they are very willing to acknowledge, that what they ſuffer, is no more than what they deſerve, but a great deal leſs: Thus as I inſinuated at firſt, *Joſeph*'s Brethren, when they felt the anguiſh of mind, that their preſent diſtreſs caſt them into, could then ſay, *Verily we were guilty concerning our Brother, in that we ſaw the anguiſh of his ſoul, and would not hear him.* It is not to be thought but that after ſo Treacherous and Villanous a part, as the ſelling of *Joſeph* was, their Conſciences had pulled every one of them for it at certain times; but it is likely they made a ſhift to forget it, as much as they could from time to time, till they fell

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into that perplexity, which their Brother caſt them in; and then they talkt to one another about their Sin freely and ſorrowfully, as if they had all long diſſembled their ſenſe of it to one another before; *Verily we were guilty concerning our Brother.* This is one end of God's Chaſtiſements, to bring thoſe to an effectual acknowledgment of their evil ways, who till then had ſmothered the Conviction of their Guilt; and that is one end too of God's warnings, When ſome are made examples of his juſtice, and he ſpares others to prove them, whether they will be warned by ſuch examples. Again, when we feel anguiſh our ſelves, we remember how we have for a long time abuſed the Patience of God, and *turned his Grace into Wantonneſs*; then our Luxury and Intemperance, whileſt we had plenty of all things for this Life, and our neglect of Inſtruction and Admonition under all means of Grace for a better Life; then I ſay theſe things come to mind: And if God ſpares us, whileſt he ſmites others, it is that we may not need any thing more, than ſuch a warning, to make us reflect upon theſe things as we ought to do. Thus alſo God's Corrections diſpoſe men to Charity and Conſideration

ration of one another; they cure us of that ſtifneſs and wantonneſs, which, whilſt all things go well with us, carries on Contention and Hatred: And therefore that we may not make it neceſſary for Providence to teach us Wiſdom and Charity by withdrawing thoſe bounties of his, which we abuſe to the pampering of Pride and Obſtinacy, we ſhould learn to be Wiſe by Examples, before we are made Examples our ſelves.

To conclude this matter, Who can be Ignorant that Affliction drives thoſe men to Prayer, and other Duties of Piety, who were very careleſs of them before? *In their diſtreſs they will ſeek God early*, though in their Proſperity they were ſo backward to any thing of Religion, and for the moſt part felt very faint and ineffectual diſpoſitions to it, rather complying with cuſtom, than with Inclination and Conſcience; and Honouring God *with their lips, while their hearts are far from him*: and this is the great danger of a Proſperous State, To be full and to forget God. But if nothing elſe will cure this Sloathfulneſs in Religion, and this indifference and coldneſs in the Service of God, yet at leaſt Affliction doth it, which makes us to feel our Dependance upon God, and

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ſhows us, that we have no hope left but in him, and then we abound in Prayers, and we attend willingly to inſtruction; we apply our ſelves to God in good earneſt, and to all the Comforts of Religion; we make many Vows and Promiſes, and we ſet our ſelves immediately to perform them: This is the Natural effect of ſufferings, when we feel them our ſelves; and if we are wiſe, it ſhould be the effect of all thoſe warnings that God hath given us by the ſufferings of others: Since therefore we cannot look abroad into the World, but we ſhall ſee the *Judgments of God in the Earth*, let us *learn Righteouſneſs*, let us *not be high-minded but fear*; let us not judge others, but judge our ſelves, and often conſider, what our Saviour replied to the ſuppoſition of their being Sinners above all others, who ſuffered ſuch things, as others had not ſuffered; *I tell you, Nay; but except ye repent, ye ſhall all likewiſe periſh.*

The

The Thirteenth Sermon.

Luke XVIII. 8.

Nevertheleſs, when the Son of man cometh, ſhall he find faith on the Earth?

FOR the underſtanding of theſe words of our Saviour, two things are to be conſidered.

1. What is here meant by the *Coming of the Son of Man.* And,
2. What is meant by his *not finding Faith upon the Earth.*

1. How we are to underſtand thoſe words, *when the Son of Man cometh?* I anſwer, The meaning is, when he cometh to Execute Judgment upon the ungodly, and to deliver his Faithful People out of their Hands: For after our Saviour

had ſpoken the Parable of the Unjuſt Judge, that was wearied by the Widows importunity to do juſtice for her againſt her adverſaries, he argued thus *v.* 7. *And ſhall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night to him, though he bear long with them?* or rather, as it might have been tranſlated, *and will he bear long in their cauſe? I tell you, that he will avenge them ſpeedily*: And then follow theſe words, *Nevertheleſs, when the Son of Man cometh* (*i. e.*) when he cometh to do that which was ſpoken of before, *viz.* to *avenge the cauſe of his elect*, or to Puniſh their Enemies and Oppreſſors, and to deliver them out of their hands.

Now of the *Coming of Chriſt* for this purpoſe, there is alſo a Twofold Signification in the New Teſtament, whereof one is manifeſtly the Principal, and much more conſiderable than the other, and that is, his ſecond coming in Perſon to Judge the Quick and the Dead, which will not be till the end of the World: Thus the Coming of the *Day of the Lord*, 2 *Pet.* 3. 10. is called *his coming*, *v.* 4. and *the Coming of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, with all his Saints*, 1 *Theſ.* 3. 13. and in many other places. And this is all the *coming of Chriſt* properly ſo called, that the New

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Teſtament mentions after his Firſt, becauſe this only is to be his Second Perſonal Appearance. But then,

2. There was another notion of the *Coming of Chriſt* after his firſt, which is alſo plainly enough intimated in the New Teſtament, and that was his Coming to deſtroy the Jews, and to deliver the Chriſtians out of their hands, which happened 40. Years after his death: And of this the 24*th*. Chapter of St. *Matthew* is an undeniable Teſtimony, where a Deſcription of the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, and a Deſcription of the Day of Judgment are ſo interwoven one with the other, that it is a matter of ſome difficulty to know punctually and fully, what is proper to the one, and what to the other: But plain it is, that the one as well as the other is called *the Coming of the Son of Man*, as appears by Verſes 27, and 37. The Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem* was made as it were a Type or Figure of the Day of Judgment; and therefore theſe words are there, *Verily I ſay unto You, this Generation ſhall not paſs away, till all theſe things be fulfilled*, *v.* 34. (*i. e.*) till they are accompliſhed in that part of the meaning which reſpects the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*, which was deſtroyed before

that Generation paſſed away. Of this it ſeems plain that St. *James* ſpeaks; *C.* 5. *v.* 6, 7. where ſpeaking to the Jews, ſays he, *Ye have condemned and killed the Juſt*; and to the Chriſtians, *Be patient therefore, Brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord*; and v. 8. *Be ye alſo Patient, ſtabliſh your hearts, for the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh*; and ſome other places there are, where the Phraſe is to be Interpreted thus; Particularly that, *Let your moderation be known unto all men, The Lord is at hand, Phil.* 4. 5. (*i. e.*) let all men ſee by your Meekneſs and Patience under thoſe Oppreſſions, which you ſuffer, that you believe thoſe Predictions, which we have delivered to you from Chriſt, that he is at hand to deliver you; And although properly the end of all things will not be till the laſt day, when the *Earth ſhall be burnt up*, and all the works that are therein; yet becauſe this notable revolution of the deſtruction of the Jews was in ſome degree like unto it, therefore it was alſo called *the end of all things*, meaning the end of the Jewiſh State and Religion, which was to be accompanied with manifeſt Tokens of God's Favour to the Chriſtians, and of his indignation at their Enemies. And thus

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we are to underſtand that paſſage in St. *Peter*, *The end of all things is at hand, be ye therefore ſober and watch unto Prayer*, 1 *Pet.* 4.7. Not that this was in a ſtrict and proper ſenſe the *Coming of Chriſt*, becauſe he did not come in Perſon, as he will do at the laſt day; but in ſome ſenſe it might be ſo called, becauſe he Appeared by his Power and Providence to do the ſame work in part, which will with incomparably greater perfection be done at the laſt, (*i. e.*) to take Vengeance of the ungodly, and to ſave his own People: For the Incorrigibleneſs of the Jewiſh Nation, and their incurable hatred of the Truth, and obſtinate Perſecution of it, was dreadfully puniſhed in the deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*; and the Chriſtians had not only all eſcaped out of it, before the *Roman* Army came againſt it, but by the deſtruction of it, they gained alſo a very conſiderable reſt from Perſecution for ſome time after.

And now the reaſon why this wonderful Providence was called the *coming of Chriſt*, ſeems plainly to be this, That after his Aſcenſion into Heaven, he ſet down at the right hand of God, and had all Power put into his hands; and therefore becauſe it is he that Governs the

World as well as the Church; ſuch remarkable revolutions, as that was, for the deſtruction of his enemies, and the ſaving of his Servants, are called the *coming of Chriſt*; *God hath given him to be head over all things to the Church*, and therefore ſuch paſſages, as that was, are called his *coming*, to ſignify, that they are the effects of his Providence and government for the good of his Church, no leſs, than if he had come in Perſon to order them, as he will do at the end of the World, to order all things then.

And for this reaſon, though in the proper ſenſe of his *coming*, he will come but once at the end of the World, yet in this improper ſenſe of it, his appeaance to deſtroy his enemies, and to ſave his People, that truſt in him, nothing hinders, but that he may be ſaid to come often before the end of World, (*i. e.*) as often as his Providence doth ſignally and remarkably appear for this purpoſe: And thus we are to underſtand the coming of the Lord in 2 *Theſ.* 2. 8. where it is ſaid of the *Man of Sin*, that *Wicked one*, That the *Lord ſhall conſume him with the Spirit of his mouth, and deſtroy him with the brightneſs of his coming*; which being to be done, before the Perſonal coming

coming of Chriſt to Judgment, the meaning muſt be, that his deſtruction ſhall be ſo remarkably the work of a Divine Providence, that all ſhall confeſs it was not the effect of Worldly Policy, but no leſs the doing of the Lord, than if himſelf had come in Perſon to deſtroy him. And whenever *the Kingdoms of the World become the Kingdoms of the Lord*; when *the knowledg of God covers the earth as the waters cover the Sea*; when thoſe magnificent predictions are fulfilled concerning the univerſal prevalence of Truth and Goodneſs amongſt men, with which the Old and New Teſtament are plentifully furniſhed, and which are to be fulfilled, before the coming of Chriſt to the laſt Judgment; then alſo is it true, that the Lord comes, (*i. e.*) by the Power of his Spirit and Providence to renew and reform a degenerate World, that was running headlong into perdition.

And thus much concerning the ſenſe of theſe words, *when the Son of man cometh*, which I have ſhown do principally ſignifie that great and amazing revolution, when he ſhall come by coming in his own Perſon at the laſt day to judge the World, but in a ſecondary ſenſe do alſo ſignifie the remarkable works of his Pro-

dence, in Puniſhing ſome, and ſaving others even in this Life. Now,

2. How are we to underſtand that other clauſe, *will he find Faith upon the earth?* The meaning of the queſtion is plainly this; That he will not find Faith on the earth, or very little in compariſon. But what is here meant by *Faith?* I anſwer, that is eaſily diſcerned by the Parable and the Application of it, that went before. The deſign of both which, was to infer the concluſion in the foregoing verſe, *And ſhall not God avenge his own* elect, *which cry day and night unto him, though he bear long with them? I tell you he will avenge them ſpeedily:* That is to ſay, God would hear the Prayers of Righteous men, and in a little time take their cauſe into his own hand; and then ſays our Saviour, *Neverthleſs, when the Son of man cometh, ſhall he find faith on the earth?* (*i. e.*) notwithſtanding the Promiſes of God to hear the Prayers of good men, and to interpoſe for them that depend upon him, there will be but little Faith in theſe Promiſes found upon the Earth, even when the Son of Man comes to fulfil them: The greateſt part will not be found to believe any thing at all of them, and ſo will be ſurprized with that day, without

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any preparation for it, or expectation of it. Many will yield to the Temptations of this preſent World, and throwing off their dependance upon God, will think to ſecure themſelves by Flattery and Hypocriſy from the Violence of Wicked men; others will deſpair of any better ſtate of things; And very few will lay to heart the promiſes which God hath made to hear the Prayers of his Servants, and to ſave them: Few will ſtrengthen themſelves in God by crying to him day and night, and by putting their whole truſt and confidence in him; and this notwithſtanding the clear and ſtrong reaſons they have from his word, ſo to do. *Nevertheleſs, when the Son of man cometh, ſhall he find faith on the earth?* And thus we may from other places of Scripture obſerve, that immediately before the Day of judgment, there will be a gteat falling away from Chriſtian Piety and Charity; nay, and the World ſhould begin once more to depart from the Purity of Faith; *many falſe Prophets ſhall ariſe, and ſhall deceive many; and becauſe Iniquity ſhall abound, the love of many ſhall wax cold.* But, ſays our Saviour, *he that endures to the end, ſhall be ſaved*; thereby intimating, that it would be ſome

ſome matter of difficulty to endure to the end. Thus alſo St. *Peter* tells us, that *there ſhall come in the laſt days ſcoffers, walking after their own luſts, and ſaying, Where is the promiſe of his coming?* which is plainly meant of the Day of Judgment, before which according to the Revelation of St. *John*, *Satan* was *to be looſed for a little time, and to go out, and to deceive the nations*, and to gather them together againſt the City of God. And therefore it will be remarkably true at the day of Judgment, that when the Son of Man cometh, he will find but little Faith in the Earth; The World will be in a careleſs Poſture, as it was before, that the Flood came and took them all away: And for the ſame reaſon there is but little Faith in the earth when God enters into Judgment with the world for the violence and iniquities of Men, and aſſerts the cauſe of innocence and righteouſneſs againſt them; for in all ſuch caſes the temptations to unbelief and apoſtacy, are very great, and likely to prevail upon many of thoſe that believe; ſo that this is the meaning, That in ſuch a wicked Age, as calls for the coming of the Son of man, the open enemies of God, which are the greater number, will be void of all regard whatſoever to his word and

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to his Providence, or if they take any notice of it, it is that of the Scoffers mentioned by St. *Peter*, who will ſay, *Where is the promiſe of his coming?* Many of his profeſſed Servants will be weary of depending upon him, and give way to Temptations, and depend more upon the *arm of Fleſh*, than upon the promiſe of God; and the Faith of many good men will be very much weakned and abated; ſo that when he cometh, he will find but little Faith upon the Earth.

And thus I perſuade my ſelf to have given you a true illuſtration of theſe remarkable Words of our Bleſſed Saviour, and that upon the two ſignifications of the Son of man's Coming, which ſeem to be both intended in this Text; and indeed it is very hard to know which was principally intended, the Day of the General Judgment, or the Deſtruction of *Jeruſalem*: The Day of General Judgment is in it ſelf the principal meaning of Chriſt's Coming, and therefore ought not to be excluded; but yet the Parable, with the Application of it, being manifeſtly intended to ſtir up that Generation to *pray to God, and not to faint*, and to give a firm Faith to the Promiſes of God, notwithſtanding the great troubles they were

were like to meet with from the unbelieving *Jews*: therefore neither could the Coming of the Son of man to be avenged of theſe his enemies, and to deliver his Servants, be excluded, but was as directly intended, as the other.

And now I proceed to obſerve the two main Points which the Text ſuppoſes, beſides thoſe which it affirms; and the conſidering of them will not a little contribute to a more perfect underſtanding of this Place.

1. It is ſuppoſed manifeſtly, that after the firſt Coming of Chriſt to call the World to Repentance, and to be offered up for our ſins, there would yet be degenerate Ages ſometimes, and a moſt corrupt ſtate of things, before his Second Perſonal Coming to Judg the World.

2. It is alſo ſuppoſed, that his Providence would then appear to ſet all things right, when there was the greateſt need to interpoſe in behalf of his Church.

1. That his firſt coming would not infallibly prevent the degeneracy and corruption of future Ages: For notwithſtanding that evidence of Truth, which he taught, *many falſe Prophets would ariſe, and*

and deceive many; and notwithſtanding the Power of his Doctrine, *iniquity would abound, and the love of many would wax cold*; and notwithſtanding both theſe advantages, yet his own ſervants would ſometimes be reduced to that ſtate, that it ſhould be needful to them to cry unto God day and night; which is a matter that may cauſe ſome wonder, if we do not conſider the reaſon of it: That the Principles and Manners of men were ſo often, and ſo generally corrupted, before the Coming of the Son of God into the World, is that, which might not appear ſtrange at all, to thoſe that conſider the weakneſs and folly of mankind: That after the Creation, the Earth ſhould ſo abound with Luxury and Violence, that God ſwept all mankind away with the Flood, but Eight Perſons: That after *Noah*'s Family had peopled the Earth again, men ſhould fall into Idolatry ſo univerſally, that God called *Abraham* out of his own Countrey, and entred into a particular Covenant with him for the maintaining of the true Worſhip in his Family and Poſterity: That *Pharaoh* ſhould oppreſs the *Iſraelites* after his Country had been ſaved by them: That the *Iſraelites* ſhould fall to Worſhip other Gods, after

that the True God had wrought ſo many miraculous Deliverances for them: That when, not without much ado, they were cured of Idolatry, they ſhould fall into ſcandalous ways of Hypocriſie and Immorality. Theſe and the like things, perhaps, are not ſo much to be wondred at, becauſe God had not as yet uſed the laſt means to inſtruct mankind, and to oblige them to Piety and Virtue; but that there ſhould be Times as bad as the worſt of thoſe, after Chriſt himſelf had appeared in the world to die for ſinners, and to bring the Doctrine of Salvation to mankind with the moſt convincing Evidence that could be deſired, and with the moſt powerful Motives that could be thought of; that notwithanding all this, Oppreſſion, Violence, Fraud, Hypocriſie, Error, Superſtition, Idolatry, and ſcandalous Examples, ſhould for ſome Ages reign no leſs than before the Times of Chriſt, and to that degree, as to ſhake the Faith even of good men; and if it were poſſible, to deceive the very beſt of all; this ſeems to be an amazing Conſideration; and tho the noble Examples of Chriſtian Piety and Virtue that have appeared in the World, and the aſſured expectation of a larger Progreſs that Chri-

Chriſtianity will make in the earth, and of better effects that it will produce, may anſwer the Objection; yet that the World, that the Church, ſhould be ſo bad under the laſt means, is what may raiſe ſome Admiration: But you are to conſider, That when our Lord firſt came into the world, he came not to eſtabliſh a Religion, which ſhould either by its Truth Convince, or by its Power Reform Mankind whether they would or no; but what was ſufficient for both purpoſes, if they would be wiſe and honeſt, and ſuffer the concernments of Eternal Life to prevail with them above their worldly Intereſts; and therefore there was as much reaſon to expect an Univerſal Reformation, as to expect that men would not reſiſt the evidence of Truth in matters of the greateſt concern to them in the whole world; but to bring them to this the Goſpel was furniſhed with no irreſiſtible means, but left them under the natural liberty they had before, with a proviſion of grace, that might be reſiſted; and therefore it was in it ſelf likely that the Truth would be oppoſed by ſome, and corrupted by others, and by many *held in unrighteouſneſs*; that ſeveral to whom it was propounded, would not believe it,

it, and ſeveral that believed it, would not obey it; and in time, that it would be mixed with Errors and Superſtitions, and framed to the deſigns of Ambition and Covetouſneſs; nay, the better and more Divine a Religion that of the Goſpel is, the more violently it would be oppoſed by ſome, and the more certainly corrupted by others: So that if we conſider the Excellency of the Goſpel, with the Purpoſe of God not to overbear the World into the Faith and Obedience of it, by forcing the natural Liberty of men, it had rather been much more ſtrange, if it had eſcaped oppoſition and corruption, than to have been both oppoſed and corrupted as it hath: Thus our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf, and his Apoſtles, foretold that it would be; *Take heed leſt no man deceive you; for many ſhall come in my name, ſaying, I am Chriſt, and ſhall deceive many; many falſe Prophets ſhall ariſe, and deceive many; and if any one ſhall ſay unto you, Lo here is Chriſt, and there is Chriſt, believe it not; for there ſhall ariſe falſe Chriſts, and falſe Prophets, and ſhall ſhew great ſigns and wonders, inſomuch, that if it were poſſible, they ſhould deceive the very elect: Behold I have told you before.* Thus he foretold how Chriſtianity

nity ſhould be corrupted by Impoſtures and Frauds: Again, ſays he, *they ſhall deliver you up to be afflicted and killed, and ye ſhall be hated of all nations for my names ſake; and then ſhall many be offended, and ſhall betray one another, and ſhall hate one another.* Thus he foretold the violence that ſhould be uſed to extinguiſh the profeſſion of the Truth. Again, ſaith St. *Paul*, 2 Theſ. 2. *There ſhall be a falling away, and the man of ſin ſhall come with all deceivableneſs of unrighteouſneſs in them that periſh, becauſe they received not the Love of the Truth, that they might be ſaved. And for this cauſe God ſhall ſend them ſtrong deluſion, that they ſhould believe a lie, that they might all be damned, who believed not the Truth, but had pleaſure in unrighteouſneſs.* There he foretels a fearful Apoſtacy from the Purity and Simplicity of the Chriſtian Profeſſion. Again, ſays he, 2 Tim. 3. 1, 2. *This know, that in the laſt days perillous times ſhall come; For men ſhall be lovers of their own ſelves, covetous, boaſters, proud, blaſphemers, diſobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, without natural affection, trucebreakers, falſe accuſers, incontinent, fierce, deſpiſers of thoſe that are good, traitors, heady, highminded, lovers of pleaſure more than lovers of God*: There he

foretels a terrible corruption of manners: And again 1 Tim. 4. 1, 2, 3. *The Spirit ſpeaketh expreſly*, ſays he, *that in the latter times ſome ſhall depart from the Faith, giving heed to ſeducing ſpirits, and doctrines of devils, ſpeaking lies in hypocriſie, having their conſcience ſeared with an hot iron, forbidding to marry, and commanding to abſtain from meats, which God hath created to be received with thanskgiving of them which believe and know the Truth.* Now lay all theſe things together, and here is as plain warning, as can poſſibly be given, of moſt corrupt and degenerate Times even after Chriſt's firſt coming; and ſo that is expreſly foretold, which the Text evidently ſuppoſes: For here would be glorious pretences to deceive, violence to compel, and wicked examples to offend the Diſciples of Chriſt. And what proviſion hath our Lord left to ſecure them from being miſled, where there is ſo much danger? They are to attend to the Doctrine, which he delivered us at firſt by his Holy Apoſtles, to ſecure themſelves from being deceived; they muſt lay to heart the Promiſes of the Goſpel to arm themſelves againſt the Temptations of the World, and the power of Evil Examples; and they are to conſider,

ſider, that all theſe things were foretold by our Lord himſelf, and his Apoſtles, that they might not be ſcandalized, when they ſhould happen, nor be tempted to ſuſpect, that either Chriſtianity was not of God from the firſt; or at leaſt, that our Lord has neglected all care of it ſince, becauſe it doth ſo little good, as yet, in the world; becauſe it runs out into ſo many Errors, and becauſe the Truth of it is ſo vehemently oppoſed; for, ſays our Saviour, *Behold, I have told you before:* But ſtill it is in their power, whether they will take warning by ſuch Predictions, and whether they will guard themſelves againſt Errors and Evil Examples; and therefore a very corrupt ſtate of things in the Chriſtian World will in all likelyhood ſhake the Faith of many believers, and cauſe ſome to *turn from the holy commandment delivered to them*, not regarding the admonitions of Chriſt and his Apoſtles before-hand: and ſo when Chriſt comes, he will find but little Faith upon the Earth; And this is the obſervation which in the firſt place is unavoidable from the Text; That even after Chriſt, there would be degenerate Ages; for this is plainly ſuppoſed, as the cauſe why there would be but little Faith found, when he ſhould

come to viſit the earth, for the iniquities and offences it abounds with. The

2. Suppoſition is, That the Providence of our Lord would then appear to ſet things right, when there was the greateſt need to interpoſe in behalf of his Church: For whereas it is ſaid, *When the Son of man cometh, ſhall he find faith on the earth?* it is intimated manifeſtly, that his coming is then to be expected, when little Faith is to be found amongſt men; and conſequently, when ſcandals and temptations are ſo ſtrong, that it is an hard matter to bear up againſt them. I have ſaid already, that the evidence of Chriſtianity doth not make all men receive it; and that the Power of Chriſtianity doth not make all that receive it, wiſe and good men; and it is not to be denied, but that amongſt Chriſtians themſelves, there are as monſtrous Errors, and leud examples, as ever there were in the World before Chriſtianity, or as there are now where Chriſtianity is not at all profeſſed. Now at this rate, ſhould the Lord of the Church, our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, let things go as they would, it would in time come to paſs, that nothing of Chriſtianity would remain in the World, but the name of it, and that for

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no other purpoſe but to do more hurt with it, than could be done without it. But how is it, that Divine Providence will interpoſe, or according to the expreſſion of the Text, that *the Son of man will come*, and will make good his Promiſe of being *with his Church to the end of the World*; which is never more remarkably fulfilled, than when he interpoſes in thoſe circumſtances, which make men think, that he will not interpoſe, and that he is not at all concerned, what becomes of the State of Religion, or the affairs of the Church? Becauſe our Lord hath not made the Goſpel an irreſiſtible means of convincing unbelievers, and reforming wicked men, therefore it would in time be needful that in order to the keeping up of true Religion, and making Chriſtians ſuch as they ought to be, that he, I ſay, ſhould by his Providence correct his own Diſciples, and reduce wretched mankind into an unavoidable neceſſity of conſideration, that Truth and Righteouſneſs ſhould not utterly fail from among the Children of men. When there is the greateſt danger of loſing the true profeſſion of Chriſtianity, our Lord will not be wanting to maintain it: When *all Fleſh had corrupted their ways*,

God came and ſwept away mankind with a Floud, and ſaved *Noah* to be the Father of a new and better Generation; When their proſperity had corrupted their ways, he called *Abraham* forth to preſerve True Religion in him, and in his Family; and theſe, and the like Providences are pledges of the ſame care to interpoſe in behalf of Truth and righteouſneſs when the Faithful ſeem to fail from among the Children of men. While God ſeems to let the World alone, and to ſuffer all men to go on in their own ways, as if he took no notice of them, nor were at all concerned, what they did, he is all the while trying and proving what they are, not indeed for his own Information, for he knows all things; but for the inſtruction of thoſe that are to come after. If he at every turn ſhould interpoſe, when we think it needful, we ſhould very ſeldom know, who are ſincere, and who are Hypocrites; It is very fit, that it ſhould be ſometimes ſeen, whether men are what they pretend to be, whether indeed they are concerned for that Truth, for which they have once pretended a mighty zeal; whether they are Governed by Conſcience, as they ſay, or by mere Worldly and Politick conſiderations; for ſuch diſ-

coveries

coveries as theſe are very inſtructing, and ſerve for the bringing about of much good in the World, and in the Church; which we may reaſonably preſume to be one cauſe, why when the Son of Man comes, he will find but little Faith upon the Earth, becauſe while he ſuffers the World to go on, as if he minded it not, he is trying thoſe that pretend to Faith, and upon the Tryal many are diſcovered not to have it. In ſhort, Divine Providence is ſo far from being regardleſs of the affairs of men, that it then moſt of all ſhows it ſelf, when men are Tempted to think, that it regards nothing (*i. e.*) when there is but little Faith to be found in the Earth; and this will be abundantly demonſtrated at the cloſe of all things, that is, at the Day of Judgment, which will be the moſt convincing act of Providence, that ever was in the World, and one forerunner of it, will be that Queſtion, *Where is the promiſe of his coming?*

And now the uſe of all ought to be that, which is the declared intention of our Saviour in the beginning of the Parable: And *he ſpake a parable to them*, to the end, *that men ought always to pray, and not to faint*: For the true Ground of Prayer is Faith in the Providence, and

Promiſes of God; and if there be no time, when theſe fail, then ought men always to pray, and not to faint (*i. e.*) they ought always to depend upon God's Providence, they ought always to believe his Promiſes, they ought always to be certain that their Prayers are heard, and will turn to good account for them; that God is gracious to all, and much more to them that love and ſerve him; and if they do all this, then they will *always pray, and not faint* (*i. e.*) and not be diſcouraged: And if they ought always to pray, then alſo, when they are moſt apt to be diſcouraged, and when there is but little Faith to be found upon the Earth; nay, then moſt of all, becauſe when Temptations to unbelief are greateſt, we ſhould the moſt of all ſtrengthen our ſelves by recourſe to God, and dependance upon him.

To this *Inſtance in Prayer*, there are two things muſt go.

1. A Stedfaſt reſolution to walk in all the ways of God, and not to be diverted out of them by any Worldly Intereſt whatſoever: For he can have no Faith to go to God, who thinks of taking care for himſelf without regard to his Duty to God:

God: A man is not in a condition to ſeek the Favour of God, or to commend his caſe to him, that contrives how to ſhift for himſelf without him.

2. A perfect reſignation of himſelf to the Will of God; for by this alſo it is, that a man entitles himſelf to his Favour and Bleſſing. The moſt effectual way to obtain the particular Bleſſings we pray for at any time, if they are ſuch things as may prove evil as well as good for us, is to leave the matter, after all, to the diſpoſal of Divine Providence; for then if we obtain them, we get his Bleſſing with them too; if we do not, we are ſure to get his Bleſſing without them, which is the general thing we pray for always: With theſe diſpoſitions we are in a fit caſe to preſent our Prayers to God for Spiritual Bleſſings for our ſelves, and for the Church of Chriſt, which will aſſuredly come accompanied with Temporal ones too, if it be beſt for us, and if God ſees that it is better for his Church to be proſperous, than to be afflicted in this world; and then it is better ſo to be, when men are ſufficiently prepared for it, by God's Correction, and their own Repentance. Men ought therefore *always to pray, and not to faint*; for their Prayers thus qualified,

lified, will not fail of obtaining what they ask; which our Saviour thought good to illuſtrate by an example in the Parable delivered before the Text, *viz.* of an *unjuſt Judge, that neither feared God, nor regarded man*; who nevertheleſs upon the importunity of a Widow, did what was right in her caſe; much more ſhall God hear the Prayers of his faithful Servants: For,

1. He is the Juſt God, and is of himſelf ready to right thoſe that do at any time ſuffer wrong.

2. He is alſo the Merciful God that regardeth men; and when we deſire things of him that are needful, he is of himſelf ready to grant what we ask, or at leaſt, that which is more needful than what we ask.

3. Whereas the Judge in the Parable ſeem'd to contemn the Poverty and Meanneſs of that Perſon, that ſued to him for Juſtice; for which reaſon ſhe is repreſented here to be a *Widow*, one of a deſtitute Condition, that wanted a Patron to aſſert her Right; God, who is Juſt and Good to all, is particularly Gracious to his ſervants, and eſteems them highly, and no circumſtances of meanneſs and diſtreſs,

diſtreſs, which he ſuffers them to fall into, can alter his favour towards them; for all which Reaſons, if the Judge in the Parable granted the Widows ſuit, merely becauſe ſhe lay upon him, and was troubleſome to him, much more will God, to whom we are never troubleſome, when we make our requeſts known to him, grant what we ask, becauſe he is Righteous and Gracious, and loveth and *pitieth us, as a father doth his children.*

THE

The Fourteenth Sermon.

A N
ASSIZE-SERMON,

PREACHED at

St. *Maries* in *Bury*, 1678.

LEVIT. XIX. 12.

Ye ſhall not ſwear by my name falſly.

THE Religious Uſe of an Oath, depends chiefly upon the Matter, and the Diſcharge. The Matter muſt be worthy of that Obligation which an Oath implies; in promiſing, it muſt not be unlawful; that we may Swear in *Righteouſneſs*, it muſt not be

be impoſſible, it muſt not be trivial; and in affirming, it muſt be ſome Fact proveable by our own Teſtimony, that we may Swear in *Judgment*: All which implies, That we are not to ſwear indeliberately, paſſionately, or commonly. The Diſcharge of an Oath muſt be anſwerable to the Obligation, which is to Sincerity of Intention, Fidelity of Performance, and the giving of Teſtimony exactly according to knowledg; and then we Swear in Truth.

All which conditions of uſing an Oath religiouſly, are put together by the Prophet *Jeremiah*, c. 4. v. 2. *And thou ſhalt ſwear, The Lord liveth, in truth, in judgment, and in righteouſneſs.* In Righteouſneſs, not profaning an Oath, by making it the bond of Iniquity; in Judgment, not expoſing it to Contempt, by uſing it raſhly and improperly; and in Truth, not violating the bond of an Oath, by breaking Promiſe, or giving Teſtimony to a Falſhood.

Swearing in Truth, is that part of the Religion of an Oath, which I ſhall at this time preſs upon you, omitting the Conſideration of what things an Oath may be converſant about; and that the rather, becauſe I ſhall apply what I have to ſay upon

upon the former Point, either to ſuch Oaths as faſten any Duty upon us, required by the Laws; or to Swearing in Courts of Judicature, where the end of Swearing, *viz.* the Judicial deciding of Controverſies, does always make the matter enquired into, worthy of ſo high a Teſtimony.

Therefore have I choſen theſe Words of God for my Subject, *Ye ſhall not ſwear by my name falſly*: A Law which, if any, is written upon the very hearts of men; and yet it pleaſed God, that it ſhould be written in our Bibles too: I would to God there were no occaſion given by the preſent age, to urge it in our Sermons, at leaſt in the way of Complaint and Reproof. But ſince Perjury, Perjury I ſay, that monſtrous ſin, which ſtrikes even at the Majeſty of God, and betrays the Throne of the King; which undermines the very Foundations of Religion and Juſtice; which does moſt ſenſibly grieve the hearts of all good Chriſtians, and threatens the ſafety of every good Subject; which does not only work miſchief to the Innocent, but alſo damns the Guilty, almoſt without remedy. If Perjury, as 'tis commonly ſaid, be grown the crying Sin of our Land, and it appears that the

the Penalties of the Law are not terrible enough to prevail againſt it; we are then bound in Allegiance to God, in Loyalty to the King, in Love to our Country, in Charity to the ſouls of men, to bring in all the aſſiſtance we can from Religion, to expel this Fatal Miſchief, and to remove this foul ſcandal from among us, by inſtructing plainly, by reproving impartially, by exhorting and perſwading moſt vehemently. In contribution to which good end, I beg your Patience while I endeavour to ſhew,

Firſt of all, Wherein lies the peculiar Obligation of an Oath.

Secondly, What are the ſeveral ways of Violating this Obligation, or incurring the Crime of Perjury.

Thirdly, What are the uſual Temptations and Inducements thereunto.

Laſtly, Some of the Fearful Aggravations that belong to the ſin.

That an Oath induces the utmoſt obligation to ſpeak the Truth, is confeſſed by general Practice, which has made, or rather received it to be the end of Controverſie: For if a man could be obliged yet more deeply than by ſwearing, ſurely the

the final reſort would not be had to an Oath; if any thing could confirm a Teſtimony more aſſuredly, which is in our Power, this ſhould not be the laſt Confirmation: Therefore let it be conſidered, that the very end of an Oath implies a peculiar obligation to diſcharge it truly; for the greater that truſt is, which I cauſe another to repoſe in me, the greater treachery I am guily of, if I then deceive him. But if the end of an Oath obliges men not to ſwear falſly, much more does the nature of it. With very good reaſon may an Oath be reſted in as the higheſt ſecurity that men can offer for their Honeſty and Truth: For the nature of an Oath conſiſts in this, That it is an appeal to God as to the Witneſs of Truth, and the Avenger of Falſhood, for the Confirmation of our own Teſtimony.

1. God is appealed to as a *Witneſs*; he who is the God of Truth and Knowledg, the faithful and infallible Witneſs of every thought and action; he whoſe Teſtimony alone, needs not to be confirmed by any other, ſince for him only it is naturally and eternally impoſſible to deceive or to be deceived: I ought never to lye or diſſemble, or break my Word, becauſe

I know my ſelf always to be in the Preſence of God: This ought to reſtrain me from being guilty of Falſhood at any time, that I am within the ſight and hearing of the God of Truth: But moſt of all am I bound to be ſincere, when I have appealed to him as preſent, for the confirmation of what I ſay. It is a grief to a good man to hear a lye told to his face; but if the lyar ſhould call him to witneſs his falſhood, this he would take in foul ſcorn, and with greateſt indignation: And what an height of impudence muſt it needs be, to put the like affront upon God himſelf, by appealing to his knowledg for our unrighteouſneſs, in a matter wherein we deal falſly? What is this, but to impute our own baſeneſs and falſhood, to his moſt Holy Majeſty; and to do what is in us, to make him a liar like unto our ſelves?

2. God is not only called upon as the Witneſs of Truth when we ſwear, but alſo as the Avenger of Falſhood: And indeed 'tis the adding of this which makes an Appeal to God's Teſtimony by Invocation, a moſt forcible Obligation to Truth, and the utmoſt Security which we can offer for the ſame. When we pretend that there is a man preſent who knows

knows that to be true which we affirm, it would be ſuperfluous to wiſh that he were revenged of us, if it be not true, becauſe he may be called forth openly to atteſt the Truth, or diſcover the Falſehood of what we ſay. Where the Witneſs is viſible, and the Teſtimony credible, it is ſufficient to appeal to his knowledg only. But when God is taken to witneſs by us, there is no voice or ſenſible appearance, by which he does either confirm or diſown the matter. What is it then which makes an appeal to God, the ſilent and inviſible Witneſs, to be of greater force to oblige our ſelves, and confirm others, that we ſpeak the truth? What is it but this, that we do appeal to his Juſtice, as well as his Knowledg, and call the Vengeance of the Almighty down upon our heads, if he diſcerns any Falſehood and deceit in our Teſtimony? And 'tis impoſſible that any obligation to ſpeak the truth, or to diſcharge a truſt, ſhould be greater than this, That if we are now guilty of lying or unfaithfulneſs, we do not only conſent, but deſire that the Indignation and Curſe of God may fall upon us. I do not think that the invoking of Divine Vengeance, if we ſwerve from the Truth, is only conſequent up-

on Swearing, according to the Opinion of ſome Learned men, but alſo that it belongs to the very Eſſence of an Oath; for that ſhould ſeem to be eſſential to it, which if it were removed, the fear of Perjury would be taken away with it: But no man doubts that appealing to God as a Judg, is implied in appealing to him as a Witneſs: Hence it is, that the *Septuagint* ſometimes uſeth ἀρὰ, a Curſe, for ὅρκος an Oath. Said *Abraham* to his Servant, *Gen.* 24. 41. *Thou ſhalt be free from this my Oath*: But the *Septuagint* render it, ἀθῶος ἔσῃ ἀπὸ τ ἀρᾶς μυ, thou ſhalt be free from this my Curſe. And this is that meaning of an Oath, which is well expreſt both by the Forms and Rites of Swearing uſed amongſt us, the common Form being this, *So help ye God*; to which the Party Sworn, gives his Aſſent by laying his Hand upon the Holy Goſpel, and kiſſing it; all which is as much as if he had ſaid, If I falſify, let me have no part in the Grace and Mercy of God, and in the Blood of Chriſt; may I be accurſed in this World, and let my name be blotted out of the Book of Life. And is there not good reaſon then, why an Oath ſhould be, as the Apoſtle ſpeaks of it, the end of Controverſie, ſince of all

other

other Obligations to Truth, this plainly is the ſtrongeſt; and if a man's Conſcience will not be held by this, it will be held by nothing.

Thus much concerning the Sacred Obligation of an Oath. I proceed to ſhew how many ways it may be violated, and the Guilt of Perjury incurr'd. It is uſually ſaid, That an Oath is either Promiſſory, or Aſſertory; but I think, that in ſtrictneſs, every Oath includes a Promiſe, even the Aſſertory Oath, by which a man binds himſelf to declare what he knows concerning ſome matter of Fact, paſt or preſent; for this Oath includes a Promiſe of declaring the truth concerning it, only the Promiſe and Performance are ſo cloſe to each other, that they can hardly be diſtinguiſh'd; whereas the Obligation of thoſe Oaths we call Promiſſory, continues for ſome conſiderable time to come. Theſe Oaths are moſtly taken out of Courts of Judicature, ſuch as the Oaths of ſubordinate Magiſtrates, to execute the Laws honeſtly, and to adminiſter Juſtice impartially; of the Members of a Society or Corporation, to obſerve the Rules, and vindicate the Rights of the ſame; of inferior Officers, ſuch as Church-wardens and Conſtables, to

preſent Offenders, and execute their Offices according to Law; finally, of Subjects, to yield true Allegiance, and Faithful Subjection to the King. Such Oaths as theſe, are directly violated two ways. Firſt, If there be not an honeſt Intention at the time of Swearing. 2. If there be not a faithful Performance afterwards: For a Promiſe has a double aſpect, both upon the preſent Intention, and the future Performance; he that makes a Promiſe, which at the ſame time he intends not to perform, is guilty of lying; and though he intends at firſt, yet if he willingly neglects the Performance afterwards, he hath broken his Word; therefore if the Promiſe was made under Oath, he is forſworn in either caſe; and if he was falſe in both, he is guilty of a double act of Perjury; nay, though the Oath were but one, yet his Perjuries may be many; for ſo long as thoſe Circumſtances remain, in which the Oath binds him, every wilful omiſſion of performing the tenor of his Promiſe, is contrary to his Oath, and conſequently a new violation of it; ſo often as he fails, ſo often he is forſworn, as truly ſo often, as if he had every time before each guilty Failure, taken the ſame Oath which he bound himſelf

ſelf withal at firſt. Thou mayeſt be ſworn once for all the year, or for all thy life; but there is no ſuch matter as being forſworn once for all, as vain people talk; for by diſobeying thy Superior, ſuppoſe thou haſt done contrary to thy Oath yeſterday, that was one perjury; and ſhouldſt thou do the like to morrow, that would be another. If thou art under a Promiſe confirmed by Oath, but not under the reſtraint of the Fear of God, thou mayeſt bind one Curſe faſt upon thy Head with another, and ſeal them with a third, and go on to treaſure up Wrath againſt the Day of Wrath.

In Courts of Judicature, Perjury is incurr'd, when falſe Witneſs is given in upon Oath; *i. e.* either when a man ſwears that to be true, which he knows to be falſe; or that he is certain of a matter, whereof he is uncertain; or that he declares the utmoſt of his knowledg concerning a Fact, when yet he conceals any part thereof. In this laſt caſe, the Witneſs is forſworn as plainly, as in the two former; for his Oath is to give in Evidence not only the Truth, and nothing but the Truth; but likewiſe the whole Truth, in anſwer to ſuch Queſtions as the Court ſhall put to him; therefore the

Witneſs is not clear from Perjury, merely by ſaying nothing but what is true, touching the matter in queſtion, if in favour to either ſide he conceals ſo much as any one Circumſtance in his Anſwers and Depoſitions, which he knows would alter the Caſe: What can be plainer? He that ſwears to declare the whole Truth, is forſworn if he does it not; and he ſurely does it not, who declares it in part only. Moreover, a Witneſs may incur the guilt of Perjury, by endeavouring to blind the Evidence with deceitful ſhuffling anſwers, inſtead of declaring what he knows, in plainneſs and ſimplicity of ſpeaking; for tho the Court by multiplying queſtions, may ſcrew out the Truth at laſt, yet he has not diſcharg'd his Oath, which obliged him not only to an actual and final diſcovery of the Truth, but to an honeſt intention of ſo doing; and 'tis very plain, that he intends not the Truth ſhould be diſcovered, who darkens and hides it as much as he can. Much leſs can his Oath be diſcharged by the help of Equivocation, and Mental Reſervations, which being of no force to ſave a Lye, are much leſs able to excuſe from Perjury.

The Oath of the Jury being a Promiſſory Oath, to bring in a Verdict according

cording to Evidence, their Oath may be doubly violated, as was now obſerved, by not intending ſo to do, and by not doing of it. If any one of the Jury be preposſeſs'd in favour of one ſide, intending, be the evidence what it will, to uſe all his intereſt with the reſt, in favour of that; that man, I ſay, is Perjur'd as ſoon as ever he is ſworn; he has ſworn falſly, though perhaps he be over-ruled, and an honeſt Verdict be brought in at laſt. Again, if any of them intend honeſtly at firſt, but are afterward wrought to conſpire in a Verdict contrary to the Evidence, they have violated their Oath at laſt. Nay, a corrupt Jury is guilty of perjury in another reſpect, ſince they ſwear againſt that very temptation which miſleads them; they are to bring in a Verdict according to the proof of the fact; whereas they make it according as they are inclined to the Parties; and yet they are ſworn, not to ſwerve from the Truth, for Fear, Hatred, Favour, or Affection.

But farther; one man may be guilty of the violation of another man's Oath; he that ſuborns a falſe Witneſs, is before God, guilty of his Perjury; yea, if he does ſo much as tempt a Witneſs to be falſe; for tho he himſelf is not actually ſworn,

ſworn, yet he deſigns that an Oath ſhould be broken. God hath ſaid, *Thou ſhalt ſwear in truth*; he in effect ſays, Thou ſhalt not do ſo; and therefore if he prevails, he is at once guilty of the falſe Witneſs, his breaking that Law of God, and likewiſe of his own contradicting it, which is every whit as bad; and there is this Circumſtance rendring the Perjury more diſpleaſing to God, That two men are guilty of violating one Oath.

The caſe is the ſame in tampering with Juries, to poſſeſs them beforehand with favour or diſaffection to either of the Parties; for what is this, but to perſwade them to Perjury? that is, to give their Verdict with reſpect to perſons, and not with regard to the Evidence.

And I do not ſee, but they who are to Impannel Juries, are likewiſe guilty of the Violation of other mens Oaths, if in any Caſe depending, they return Jurors whoſe Intereſt and Affection they believe will carry them to favour the ſide befriended by their own wiſhes; for though they may chuſe whether they will be forſworn, yet he that returns 'em had a mind that they ſhould, rather than the Cauſe ſhould miſcarry on that ſide to which he is partial himſelf.

Laſtly,

Laſtly, Whoever in behalf of a Client, puts words into the mouth of a ſlow Country Witneſs, while he is giving his Teſtimony, by which the Witneſs means one thing, and he another, by this means perverting the Evidence, while the poor man perceives it not; he does not only directly offend againſt the end of ſwearing, which is the diſcovery of the Truth, but before God he is as guilty of the Violation of an Oath, as the honeſt Witneſs would have been, had he knowingly uſed the ſame ſubtilty in giving Teſtimony, which was indeed but practic'd upon him.

And thus much concerning the uſual ways, direct or indirect, by which an Oath may be violated; it being requiſite to touch upon them at leaſt, that what remains to be ſaid, may find us prepared for particular Application.

As to the Inducements to Perjury, which was the Third Subject propounded, there is no doubt but every ſin which preys upon the Conſcience, does form the mind more or leſs into ſome diſpoſition to this, the blackeſt of them all; every thing enclines to it, which leſſens the Senſe of Religion, and the Fear of offending God: The prevalency of any luſt, eſpecially of Ambition and Revengeful-

neſs

neſs, animates men to break looſe from all the moſt ſacred bonds that ſhould reſtrain them from gratifying their inordinate appetites. Again, Partiality grounded upon Prejudice and Intereſt, upon Envy and Covetouſneſs, has been the cauſe of many Perjuries; in moſt queſtions concerning Rents and Tythes, every body is ready to ſay how the Caſe is like to go.

But when all is ſaid, there is nothing in this our Age has made ſuch foul work in ſwearing, as Faction has done; that combination of Covetouſneſs, Pride and Ambition, of Envy, Hatred and Malice, united and made faſt together, under Hypocriſy. Any one of theſe ſingly by it ſelf, leads to Perjury; but when they all conſpire they drive on to it, without oppoſition.

Another inlet to the violation of Oaths, is the Practice of Common Swearing; he that will call God to witneſs Trifles, by degrees loſeth the Reverence of an Oath, and is within a little of calling him to witneſs falſhood, I mean upon Solemn Oath; for 'tis not to be doubted, that the Cuſtomary Oaths of Converſation, make the Swearer guilty of frequent Perjuries, when he thinks not of it; but if he ſwears in truth, before a Court of Judicature, againſt his Intereſt or Affection, we are to thank

thank his Generoſity for it, and not the reſpect he has for an Oath. Otherwiſe, he that Swears commonly and raſhly, will upon any conſiderable Temptation Swear falſly with deliberation.

In a word, ſuch are the Inducements and Occaſions of Perjury, that perhaps it were to be wiſhed that the manner of adminiſtring Oaths, were in all places a little more awful, and ſolemn than it is, to ſtrike into thoſe men ſome reverence of an Oath, and fear of Perjury, who bring nothing of it along with them. Indeed, the moſt effectual way to prevent falſe Swearing, would be to conſider the heinous Aggravations of the Sin, ſome of which in the laſt place I ſhall now repreſent.

We know that ſincerity in ſpeaking of the Truth, and keeping ones Promiſe, is every man's Duty, whether he be Sworn or not. The natural Obligation we lye under to be true and faithful to our Word, is ſo ſtrong and ſo ſenſible, that every Man is aſham'd to be found in a lye. But whoever is known to be a common falſifier of his Word, and ſo given to Deceit, that he is not to be truſted, let him be endued with never ſo many conſiderable and uſeful Parts beſides, that

that ſhall be ſure to ruin his Reputation. Inſincerity is ſo foul a Stain, that no good quality can wipe it out; and this ſhews that there is a ſtrong Obligation to truſt, common to all Mankind; wherefore this muſt needs be one heinous Circumſtance of Perjury, That when the ſacred Bond of an Oath, is once violated, the perjur'd Perſon is guilty of breaking that Faith and Truth, which was a natural Duty before.

But ſincerity is ſtill more a Duty, when my Teſtimony is required in order to publick Peace and Juſtice. All Men have right to be truly dealt with, much more the Magiſtate, by whom I am protected moſt of all, when he requires it in order to the doing of Juſtice, or the ſecuring of Government. It is then my Duty to the Magiſtrate, 'tis my Duty to my Neighbour, 'tis my Duty to my Countrey, to ſpeak the Truth clearly and honeſtly; and if I promiſe any thing, to diſcharge it faithfully. The diſcharge of thy Office which thou art Sworn to execute, is both requiſite for the publick Good, and requir'd by juſt Authority; if thou hadſt not ſo much as promiſed it, thou hadſt been ſtill obliged to the ſame, in obedience to thy Superior, in Love to thy Country.

try. If thou hadſt been barely required to give thy Teſtimony in Court; yet, even without Oath or Promiſe, thou wert greatly bound to Truth; becauſe the telling of a lye in this Caſe, were impudent undutifulneſs to the Judge, and manifeſtly injurious to thy Neighbour. In like manner, a Verdict ſhould be according to the Evidence, if it were only for this, that a Controverſy might be righteouſly decided, inſtead of eſtabliſhing ſome inſtance of Iniquity by a Law. This therefore is a farther Aggravation of the Sin of Perjury in all theſe Caſes, That the Oath which is violated, did not only bind to that ſincerity, which is the Duty of all Men every where; but to that Truth, which was particularly demanded by the Magiſtrate, which was to be an inſtrument of Juſtice and publick Security, which was neceſſary for the preventing of Wars, and the doing of right.

But theſe are light Aggravations in Compariſon to thoſe that ariſe from the nature and particular Obligation of an Oath it ſelf. At leaſt, they will receive great weight from theſe, as you ſhall ſee preſently.

'Tis

'Tis an exceſs of impious boldneſs, to worſhip God with a lye at the Tongues end; but Swearing is an act of Worſhip. *Thou ſhalt worſhip the Lord thy God, and ſwear by his Name.* Swearing is a direct acknowledgment of the Divine Attributes; and to Swear falſely, muſt needs be as bad as making long Prayers to devour Widows houſes. But he that Swears, does not barely worſhip God, he takes him to witneſs in his behalf too, ſo the forſworn Man calls him to atteſt a Lye. To imagine the wickedneſs of this, what would you think of a Man, who ſhould appeal to ſome worthy Perſon, for the truth of a matter, which he is ſure the Gentleman knows to be a lye? Farther, what if he ſhould dare to appeal to the Judge himſelf, or to the whole Court of Judicature, tho he knew that every one there would utterly deny it; however, that they would not confeſs it without being Liars like unto himſelf? But this is a ſhameleſs inſolence, that no Man ever ventured upon. What think you then of him that Appeals to God's Teſtimony for the credit of a Lye? To the Teſtimony of God, I ſay, who is infinitely greater, and to be had in more Reverence, than the moſt venerable

Aſſemblies

Aſſemblies of Men. When we are guilty of other Sins, we ſneak away from the thoughts of God. The Drunkard, and the Adulterer, and the Thief, are aſham'd and afraid to think there is ſo great a Witneſs of their Crimes; and in Compariſon to the falſe Swearer, they retire with ſome ſort of Modeſty from his Preſence, hiding him from themſelves at leaſt, tho they cannot hide themſelves from him. 'Tis only the forſworn Wretch, that muſt of neceſſity Sin without any ſhamefac'dneſs; that tells a Lye to the very Face of God, and deſires him to obſerve it, and be the witneſs of his own diſhonour.

And yet a more deſperate degree of Wickedneſs is implied in Perjury than this, and that becauſe an Oath is an Appeal to God's Juſtice. For the Swearer by conſenting to fall under the Rigour of Juſtice, unleſs he deals uprightly, as far as in him lies, he calls himſelf off by Perjury from any Appeal to Mercy afterward. By other Sins we make an ill uſe of the Mercy of God; but by this, we ſet it at defiance. The perjur'd Man deprives himſelf, as much as he can, of the laſt hope of Sinners, who though they put many affronts upon the reſt of

God's Attributes, yet ſtudy to keep a reſerve in his Goodneſs and Compaſſion; but he throws himſelf, according to his own Will and Conſent, into the hands of Divine Juſtice, and its utmoſt Severity.

Yet farther, through all theſe Obſtacles does the falſe Swearer make his way, that he may come to pervert Juſtice and Equity. A Man ſhould be horribly afraid at the thought of ſo much Impiety, if his end were to help the Fatherleſs and Widow, and to ſave the Poor from wrong, or to ſecure his Country out of danger; but how much more, when he hunts for the precious Life, when he *betrays* the Simple, and protects the Crafty, or ſerves the deſigns of Faction or Oppreſſion? For I ſhould gueſs that Forſwearing is never practic'd, but upon the Wrong ſide, at leaſt, that 'tis called in very rarely, in compariſon, to aſſiſt the Right. 'Tis the unjuſt Man that ſeeks to defend himſelf by artificial delays, by indirect Proceedings, and at a dead lift by downright Perjuries; while the Righteous truſts to the Honeſty of his Cauſe, and the Wiſdom of the Judg, and the Providence of God. But if I ſhould be miſtaken in this, if Forſwearing ſhould be more ordinary then I imagine, even

on

on the Right ſide; ſurely it muſt be, becauſe 'tis ſo common on the Wrong, that nothing is believ'd to be ſafe without it. Behold then, what horrible Confuſion it makes in the World, while it confounds Right and Wrong, Truth and Falſhood, Juſtice and Injuſtice, blotting out the cleareſt Characters, by which they can be diſtinguiſht from one another in Courts of Judgment. 'Tis this, which levels an Honeſt Cauſe with the Unjuſt one that is advanced againſt it; nay, which creates Confidence of Succeſs in the Oppreſſor, and fills the good Man, who dares not be damn'd, with Miſtruſt and Fear. It is this, which makes the fortune of Verdicts as uncertain, as that of Arms; and gives Courage to the Villain to wage Law with the Innocent; it robs Virtue of much of its Defence and Security in this World, and puts Power into the hands of the Malicious, and affords Protection to the Murderer, and the Traytor. The deteſtable Effects thereof in the preſent Life, cannot be deſcribed, but by the Cries of the Oppreſſed, the Sighs of Orphans, the Tears of Widows, the Ruin of Families, and the Shedding of innocent Blood. And tho every man

that dares be Forſworn, has not arriv'd thus far in doing miſchief, yet he only wanteth a gainful Opportunity, or an unlucky Provocation, and then a Devil to put it into his head.

To conclude, What ſhould I ſay farther, to enkindle your Zeal againſt a Sin already ſwell'd into ſo vaſt a bigneſs, but this, That ſo far as it prevails, it is always likely to intercept between us, and the moſt happy Influence of the Honourable Judges, when they come to us full of the invaluable Bleſſings of Government; they in whom good Subjects, and wronged Innocents expect to meet with powerful Patrons, while none but the Criminal and Seditious ſhrinks away with Shame and Fear; who to the State bring along with them Peace, by deciding our Controverſies; and Plenty, and Honour, and Safety, by enforcing Obedience to the Laws: Who to the Church bring the Securities of her Patrimony and Rights, making the Benefits of their Juſtice to bear good proportion with the Authority of their Commiſſion, which they have received not only from the King, but by him from God, who are the faithful Diſpenſers

Diſpenſers of the Juſtice of the King, and the moſt welcome Meſſengers of his Love and Care for the People: Who from the Soveraign convey Life and Spirit, through the whole Body of the Nation, returning the ſame in grateful Loyalty and Duty from his Subjects, and in their Bleſſings and Prayers for the Eſtabliſhment of the Throne. Should we not all conſpire to remove every hindrance of ſuch Advantages as theſe, which being rightly conſidered, ſeem to be no leſs deſirable, neceſſary and univerſal, than the refreſhing ſhowers, and the return of fruitful Seaons. But than Perjury, nothing does more fatally intercept the Communication of thoſe excellent Benefits; than Perjury, I ſay, which can obſtruct Juſtice in its very Courſe, and baffle the moſt ſolemn Preparation for it, even when the Judge is preſent, when the Court is ſet, when the matter is opened, when all things are ready for impartial Proceedings, when the Injur'd is arrived to the height of his hopes, and the evil Doer is almoſt faln into the hands of Juſtice. To ſum up all; The man who dares be Forſworn, is one whom niether a natural Senſe of Good and Evil,

Evil, nor Duty to the Magiſtrate, nor Love to his Country, nor Juſtice to his Neighbour, nor Compaſſion to the Miſerable, nor the Preſence of the Judg, nor the Preſence of God, nor an Appeal to his Knowledg, nor an Appeal to his Juſtice, and the fear of damning himſelf by his own Sentence, can retain from Lying, and breach of his Word.

We can hardly think that ſuch a Wretch as this, is fit to live upon the face of the Earth. But ſhall he then ever aſcend into God's holy hill? Shall he ever come into the Portion of the Righteous? How tender are thy Mercies, O God, who art yet willing to accept even of his Repentance; who haſt yet ſuſpended the moſt deſerved Execution of his own Sentence againſt himſelf, and left him under ſome poſſibilty of Forgiveneſs. In conformity to which great Example we pray, that he may be ſnatcht as a Brand out of the Fire, and through a great Repentance, eſcape the Damnation of Hell.

Now to the moſt Gracious and Sacred Majeſty of the infinite Good God, be aſcribed all Honour and Bleſſing for evermore.

The

The Fifteenth Sermon.

A

SERMON

Preach'd at

WINDSOR,

Before the

PRINCESS of *Denmark*.

GEN. V. 24.

And Enoch walked with God, and he was not, for God took him.

IN theſe words there are two things expreſſed:

1. The Character of *Enoch*, that he *walked with God.*

 2. The

2. The manner of his end in this World, that he *was not, for God took him.* Both which points I intend to conſider, and then to ſhow how we may make ſuch Conſiderations profitable to our ſelves.

1. Concerning his Character; we may obſerve, that it was given to none of his Predeceſſors; from which we muſt not conclude that none of them were good men, but only that he excelled the reſt. In ſo very ſhort an account of the Patriarchs before the Flood, as we have in this Hiſtory, wherein little more is reported of them, but their Names and their Age, to have it ſaid of one them, that he *walked with God*, and but of one, is a reaſonable intimation, that he excelled in Godlineſs and Virtue; And this appears farther, in that God *tranſlated him*, which of it ſelf implies that he had arrived to great perfection. But to *walk with God* is the Character of all Perſons, that are truly Holy and Good, though it agrees more eminently to ſome than to others; as it did to *Enoch*, more than to all his Predeceſſors. As for the expreſſion, it is figurative, but yet very plain; for *Walking* doth in this place, as in many more,

more, ſignifie the general Courſe and Tenour of a mans Life; and therefore *walking with God* is a lively expreſſion of his doing thoſe things, which are well pleaſing to God; as if in every ſtep of his paſſage through this World, he had God ſo preſent with him, as to ſee him with his bodily eyes: which Meaning may be more diſtinctly explained by theſe two Particulars.

1. That Piety, or Faith in God, is the over-ruling Principle of his Actions.

2. That becauſe he is Governed by ſuch a Principle, he lives in the conſtant Practice of all other Virtue and Duty.

1. That Piety, or Faith in God, is the over-ruling Principle of his Actions; a Reaſon, that prevails with him, above all other reaſons and motives whatſoever: He is therefore ſaid to *walk with God*, becauſe it is a ſenſe of God that runs through his Converſation, and takes place againſt all other conſiderations; and leaves a mark of it ſelf upon all his behaviour: A ſenſe of God, I ſay, that is, of God's Infinite Wiſdom, Power and Goodneſs, of the Abſolute right which he hath

hath to be obeyed by his Creatures, and of their abſolute dependance upon him; A ſenſe of his preſence *every where, beholding the evil and the good*; A ſenſe of his Juſtice, that will not ſuffer the wicked to go unpuniſhed; and of his Faithfulneſs, that will not ſuffer the Righteous to be unrewarded: It is this ſenſe of God, that Governeth his Converſation, that reſtrains him, that puts him forward, that ſets bounds to his deſire, and to his uſe of pleaſures; that preſcribes to him how to get, and how to uſe his wealth; that hath to do in all his affairs, and admits no reaſon from Fleſh and Blood, or from worldly intereſt, to be heard, but in ſubordination to it ſelf: And ſurely he that is thus affected, that believes in God, that ſtands in Awe of him, that Loves him, and puts his Truſt in him, may well be ſaid to *walk with God*, ſince he doth ſo ſteddily walk in his ways, as if God took him by the Hand, and led him through every doubtful paſſage of his Life; for it is in effect the ſame thing, that he having God ſtill *before his eyes*, or rather a lively ſenſe of him in his heart, and knowing what his will and pleaſure is, regards nothing in compariſon, but the doing of that which

will

will pleaſe him; and whatever reaſons of action do, as he goes thorough the World, mix themſelves with this; This is ſtill the ſupreme and prevailing Reaſon, by which all others are either allowed or rejected. This, I ſay, That what God will be pleaſed with, muſt be done; and what will diſpleaſe him muſt be let alone. And this is that *Faith* by which the juſt have lived in all Ages, That *Faith* therefore, which the 11*th* to the *Hebrews* ſo highly extols; Thoſe worthies recorded there, believed *that God is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him.*

2. To this we muſt add, That becauſe he that is ſaid to *walk with God*, lives by Faith, therefore he lives alſo in the Practice of all other Virtue and Duty: For Faith leads a man to all, which no other Principle that we know of will do, though other Principles there are of good uſe too. To *walk with God*, is ſomething more than to cheriſh, and keep alive the good inclinations that came into the world with us; for it is to correct and amend the bad ones: ſome men are by Nature framed to many Virtues, as I believe all are to ſome or other; but no man is naturally diſpoſed to all; and moſt cer-

certainly every one hath a ſhare of corrupted nature; but he that walks with God, is Ruled by a Principle, that doth not only improve what is good in his Nature, but mends what is bad in it.

It is alſo a great deal more, than to obſerve Humane Laws; ſince the Laws of men can do no more, than reſtrain People from being intolerably bad, and ſuch as Humane Society cannot bear. He that believes in God, ſubmits to juſt Authority for Conſcience ſake; but the caſe hath often happened, when for the ſame Conſcience ſake, ſuch a one hath done his Duty, by refuſing to do what the Law of man required; which is a plain argument, that Humane Authority is not the Rule of Perfection; and that we muſt Live by an higher Principle, than that of Obedience to Man, if we live in all reſpects, as we ought to do.

It is ſomething more, than to govern our intentions and actions by doing well for our ſelves in this World: For although integrity and well-doing in all kinds of duty is generally the beſt way to proſperity in this Life; yet ſometimes the contrary happens, and more is to be got by Flattery and Falſhood, than by Honeſty and

and Sincerity; nay it is the inordinate deſire of the Proſperity of this world, that ſtill makes men do baſe and wicked things; and therefore the regard of our eaſe and advantage here, cannot be the true Principle of Virtue. And if we ſhould bring every other reaſon of doing what we ought to do, to the Tryal, every other reaſon beſides that of Faith, will be found very defective and inſufficient, and ſuch as will lead a man to evil as well as to good, as it happens. But a ſenſe of God, with the belief of all his Perfections, and all his Promiſes and Threatnings, makes a man every way, and in every reſpect, what he ought to be, becauſe it ſhews him all his Duty, and obliges him to all his Duty; and while he is under the Power of his Faith, he is ſteddy in the right way, not to be moved out of it by any Temptation; but whether it be opportunity invites, or danger threatens, what Temptation ſoever ſets upon him, he will ſay with *Joſeph*, *How can I do this great wickedneſs, and ſin againſt God?* Setting aſide Faith, it may bear diſpute, whether it be adviſeable or no, in ſuch or ſuch a caſe, to do what becomes a Righteous and Virtuous man; but let a man Live by

Faith

Faith in God, and there can be no diſpute about it. *Rejoyce, O young man, in thy youth, and walk in the ſight of thine eyes,* and the imagination of thy Heart; that is, were there nothing elſe to be conſidered but Pleaſure, nothing but Wealth and Greatneſs, but the Splendor of this World, and the gratifying of a luſt, this liberty might poſſibly be made to appear not ſo very unreaſonable. *But know, that for all theſe things God will bring thee to Judgment.* That to be ſure turns the caſe, and anſwers every objection againſt our Duty, and every argument for any Sin; and therefore he that walks with God, doth all his Duty otherwiſe, is good in all kinds, and in every place where his buſineſs lies, or where his Temptations lie; For *God is in all his thoughts,* in all his affairs, in all his company, and in his retirement from Company; God's word is with him, that word of God which ſhews him his Duty upon all occaſions, and which ſhows him the rewards of doing what is commanded, and the Puniſhments of Diſobedience; and the ſence of his Preſence is with him, that ſenſe which fills him with Life and Joy in well-doing, eſpecially where the Temptation to Sin is very great,

and

and which would diſmay him, and make him a burden to himſelf, if he ſhould act contrary to his clear and ſetled Judgment of what he ought to do. In ſhort, to *walk with God*, is to be univerſally good and righteous, which no man can be, but he who lives by Faith; Hence it is, that we find God himſelf encouraging the *Father of the Faithful* to go on in his way of Piety and Virtue, as hitherto he had done; *Walk before me, and be thou perfect, chap.* 17. *v.* 1. that is, Be thou ſtill Ruled by my Word, ſtill believe my Promiſes, and Truſt my Providence, and in all that thou doeſt, be mindful of this, that I am with thee, and then ſhalt thou be perfect. An example to all Generations of Virtue as well as of Piety, and of all good works, no leſs than of a firm Faith: Hence it is, that the wiſe man tells us, that *by the fear of the Lord men depart from evil*, Prov. 16. 6. and that *the Fear of the Lord is a fountain of life to depart from the ſnares of Death*, Prov. 14. 27. And St. *John*, *This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our Faith.* 1 John, 5. 4.

I have thus ſhewn, what is meant by the Character of *Enoch*, when it is ſaid that he *walked with God*, *viz.* That his regard

gard to God was the over-ruing Principle of all his actions, and that becauſe he was Governed by Faith, he lived alſo in the conſtant Practice of his Duty in all relations whatſoever; this being the only Principle that makes a man in every reſpect, what he ought to be. I proceed,

2. To ſay ſomething concerning the end he made in this World: *He was not, for God took him*; which place is thus explained by the Author to the *Hebrews, chap.* 11. *v.* 5. That *Enoch was tranſlated; that he ſhould not ſee death, and was not found, becauſe God had tranſlated him* (*i.e.*) he died not, but was Tranſlated alive into Heaven; and it was a ſtrange ſurprize to the Age in which he Lived; who by his ſudden removal from them, and their hearing no more of him, were convinced, that it was God who had taken him to a better Life. Now that which we are in this place to conſider, is the inſtruction ſo Singular an act of Providence afforded to the world; and there are theſe two ends to which it manifeſtly ſerved, *viz.* That that Age might be awakened into the conſideration of another Life, by ſo ſurprizing a Teſtimony thereof, as this was; and withall, that they might by ſo ſenſible an Argument be led to conſider, that the true reward

reward of Piety and Integrity, was not in this World, but in a better.

1. There was this inſtruction in the Tranſlation of *Enoch*, which the World could not but take notice of, That there was undoubtedly another life after this, to which he was taken, Soul and Body, having left no part of himſelf behind him here, as other Mortals did. And by this time, ſuch an inſtruction was grown very needful; For the World, tho it was yet in its Youth and Vigour, was grown old enough for men to forget their Creator, and to abandon themſelves for the moſt part to a Voluptuous and Diſſolute Life: And that this is no uncertain Conjecture, appears from hence; that *Enoch* was Tranſlated but 69 years before *Noah* was Born, in whoſe time Mankind was grown to ſuch an intolerable degree of Licentiouſneſs, That God ſent the Flood to ſweep all away, but eight Perſons. Now it is not to be thought, that the World was overſpread with ſuch Monſtrous Vices all of a ſudden, but that after the manner of all Humane Degeneracy, Corruption of manners, and of Principles too, came on by degrees, and conſequently that in *Enoch's* time, who was Tranſlated little leſs than a Thouſand

Years after the Creation, there was a very great decay of Piety and Virtue every where; that men were generally bewitched with the Pleaſures of the beautiful and charming Place, which the Earth was before the Flood, and forgot their Creator, and had loſt the Senſe of that infinitely better World, which *Adam* and the Religious Patriarchs had by revelation from God given them aſſurance of: In ſuch an Age as this, when for the reaſon now mentioned, it is evident, that the generality of Mankind were ſunk into Debauchery, and perhaps into Infidelity too; *Enoch* was a ſteady Pattern of Piety and Virtue; and whileſt moſt Men walked after their own Luſts, and the beſt were much to blame, he walked with God, and Lived above the pleaſures and enjoyments of this Life, having God before his eyes, and another Life, and a better Life in his hopes. It is therefore very reaſonable to conceive, that God intended by this ſurpriſing Teſtimony of Tranſlating *Enoch* alive into a better World, to convince the unbelieving, to awaken the inconſiderate, and to call off that Voluptuous Age from theſe brutiſh debaucheries, to mind better things, and to prepare for a better Life; eſpecially ſince in the ſecond place,

2. This

2. This was a very inſtructing admonition, That God who *is a rewarder of them that diligently ſeek him*, as the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* ſays upon this very example of *Enoch*; that God, I ſay, rewarded his Piety, not with giving him a longer Life in that pleaſant World, but in another, which was therefore a place more happy and deſirable than the Earth was, even in that delicious ſtate and condition of it, before the Flood had made as ſtrange an alteration in that, as it made in the Age of man's Life: That God, I ſay, ſhould take him alive out of this World, when it abounded with all manner of delights and pleaſures; and this at the Age of 365 Years, when he was but a young man, as the World was then, younger in proportion, than we are now at 30; when he was in full vigour and capacity for all the entertainments of ſenſe, which the Earth afforded, even to Luxury, and this according to the courſe of Nature to laſt for ſome hundreds of Years to come; That God ſhould Tranſlate him under theſe circumſtances to another Life, after he had ſerved him with a conſtant Piety in his Younger Years, and lived among men with an unreprovable Innocence and Virtue; this, I ſay,

was a demonſtration to all that would conſider it, That that World to which he was Tranſlated, was a better World than that from which he was taken; and that they might be ſure to underſtand this inſtruction, God took him not away by the common means of mortality; ſince if he had died, that Vicious Age would have imputed that change to any thing, rather than to a Divine Providence, rewarding ſo excellent a Man with ſo early a removal to a better Life; and therefore he was taken away alive, that they might not be able to queſtion the power that did it, or to miſtake the reaſon, why it was done, that they might know *Enoch* had obtained a reward from God, ſuitable to that Life that he had lived here, and to that Faith by which he had lived, and in which he had *wrought righteouſneſs*; being removed from hence to pleaſures more pure and raviſhing, than all this World can afford. In a word, they might have ſeen, and for ſome time it is like they acknowledged it, though they ſoon fell back again, That the great buſineſs of mankind here, is to live *in all Godlineſs and Honeſty*; and that God doth not reward them that do ſo, with the Pleaſures and Glories of this World,

World, but with the enjoyments of a better.

And now having ſaid thus much concerning the extraordinary character of *Enoch*, and the ſingular end it pleaſed God to make with him in this World, I have yet more to do by way of application; and that

1. To propound the example of *Enoch*, and ſuch as he was, who *walked with God*, to our imitation. And

2. To propound, though not the manner, yet the ſubſtance of his reward, for our encouragement to walk as he walked.

1. To propound his example, as an example that is of it ſelf worthy of our imitation, and is withal an imitable example, an example that is worthy to be followed, and an example not too hard to follow; that it is worthy of our imitation, appears both from that Life to which his Faith led him, and from the Nature of that Principle it ſelf by which he lived. As to the Life whereunto it leads, it is made up of *whatſoever things are Juſt, Honeſt, Lovely, of good report, if there be any Virtue, Praiſe*; of Juſtice, Faithfulneſs, Temperance, Government

of Paſſions, Wiſdom and Fortitude, which are the Glory of Humane Nature, and things *acceptable to God*, and *approved of men.* Theſe things are enough to recommend the Principle from whence they come: And yet (2.) it is in it ſelf the beſt, whether we conſider (1.) our concernment in thoſe things which we believe. For if there be a God, what is our dependance upon this World, to our dependance upon him? And if we ſhall endure beyond this Life, and that for ever, what are our Fortunes till we die, to our Eternal ſtate after death? It is not our mere Nature, but our Relation to God, that makes us conſiderable; and we are very abject Creatures, if we have nothing to do but Eat and Drink, and to Live a ſenſual Life for a little time, and then to Vaniſh into nothing. Or (2.) whether we conſider Faith as a perſuaſion grounded upon rational evidence, that is, ſuch evidence, as requires a Free and Unprejudiced and clear Judgment to perceive, but which not bearing upon the Senſes of Men, diſtinguiſheth between the Wiſe and the Honeſt on one ſide, and unteachable Perſons on the other: A Believer doth of all men make the moſt proper uſe of his reaſon, becauſe he aſſents to the Principles

ciples of Religion; For inſtance, That there is a God; not upon immediate bodily Sight, but upon a means of Conviction ſuited to a reaſonable nature: Or (3.) Whether we conſider Faith, as a means to ſecure an happy Enjoyment of our ſelves in this World, of which I need to ſay no more; that it is the only true ſupport of Man's mind, under all the Afflictions and Calamities of Life; and that which can make us eaſy under them, will make us happy in every condition; That the Example of theſe Men, who have lived by Faith, and walked with God, is worthy of our Imitation, is a Subject that might be ſpoken to without end. But let us conſider it,

2. As an imitable Example: For that it is ſo, the Pattern mentioned in the Text, doth abundantly prove; *Enoch* lived in a World that was full of Temptation, and thoſe as dangerous as Temptations can poſſibly be, the Temptations of Luxury, which in their kind are inferior to none; and as to their degree, when *Enoch* lived, they were at the height; and as I have ſhown already, he had bad Examples enough, and probably but very few that were good. So that Piety lay

under great diſadvantage in the common Opinion, and likely enough it was a matter of ſome reproach to obſerve Rules: for that Generation of Men was now began, of whom we find in the next Chapter, that *God ſaw that the wickedneſs of men was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart, were only evil continually*: They ſet themſelves at no time to do any good; all their Buſineſs was to follow their brutiſh Appetites from one day to another, without reſtraint; the World was haſtning apace to that Condition, when *Enoch* lived; and yet he lived ſo piouſly, ſet ſo good an Example, as if he had never ſeen any but good ones himſelf; and whilſt almoſt all Men were buſy to fill themſelves with the exceſs of ſenſual Pleaſures, his only buſineſs, in compariſon, was to pleaſe God; he looked up every day to his Maker, out of whoſe hands ſo lately came that beautiful Fabrick, which was made for Man; and inſtead of ſurfeiting himſelf with thoſe delightful entertainments of Senſe that were round about him, he raiſed his mind above them to the Contemplation of the Power, Wiſdom, and Goodneſs of God; he offered to the Creator of all things, the Sacrifices of Praiſe and

and Thankfulneſs; he reſigned himſelf wholly to his Will and Pleaſure; he believed his Promiſe of a better World; and in that Faith he *wrought righteouſneſs*. And what can be ſaid, why we, who cannot reaſonably count our Temptations greater than thoſe he was under; why we, I ſay, ſhould not alſo live as he did? Why ſhould the Government of our Paſſions, and the ordering of our Converſation by the Rules of Religion, be harder to us, than it was to him? What ſhould hinder us from adoring and praiſing our Maker every day, and from offering our Prayers and Supplications to him? Why ſhould not we conſider, that God is preſent with us every where, and ſees us in all that we do, that we may always behave our ſelves, as in his Preſence? May we not with as much advantage, as he poſſibly could have, look beyond this World, and compare it with immortality in a far better ſtate of things than this; and *ſet our affections upon things above, and not upon things on the earth?* Eſpecially, ſince we have not here a continuing place; I mean, ſince we do not expect to live hardly the tenth part of that time upon Earth, which the Patriarchs did before the Flood; but

all

all our *days are few and evil*, and our Life ſhort and troubleſome; and therefore doth of it ſelf admoniſh us to look after another, and to provide better for our ſelves hereafter, than we can poſſibly do here.

Let no man ſay, That the baits of Pleaſure, and the cares of Life, and the multiplicity of his worldly Affairs; that the evil manners of others, and the ſnares of Converſation, and his unavoidable Engagements in the World, will not permit that Juſtice and Purity, that Devotion and Sobriety, which Religion requires; nor that conſideration of God and another Life, which is neceſſary to *keep us unſpotted from this preſent world.* That for this purpoſe, we muſt retire out of the World, and live in Cells, or in Houſes where there is nothing elſe to do, but to Watch and Pray; where the cares of Life cannot follow them; where evil Examples, and where Temptations cannot find them out: All this is but unreaſonable, and vain pretence: For, I beſeech you, what was *Enoch*, and his Profeſſion and Order of Life in the World? Was he ſhut up from any part of common Converſation, or eaſed from any part of the common Cares of this Life? No, by no means; he in all reſpects of Secular Converſation,

verſation, and civil Relation, was in the very ſame condition that other Men were, as you will confeſs, if you look back to *verſe* 21. and ſo on till you come to the Text: *And Enoch lived ſixty and five years, and begat Methuſaleh: And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuſaleh three hundred years, and begat Sons and Daughters: and all the days of Enoch were three hundred ſixty and five years; And Enoch walked with God,* &c. By which you may ſee, that *Enoch*, who had this Teſtimony, was a married Man, and for that Reaſon engaged as much in the neceſſary Affairs of Civil Converſation, as any other; and we do not find, that after he *begat Methuſaleh*, his eldeſt Son, he left his Wife, and his Family, and betook himſelf to any retirement, and was from that time forward, under Vows of ſingle Life; it is expreſly ſaid, that *Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuſaleh, three hundred years, and begat Sons and Daughters.* So that all this time, *viz.* for three hundred years, of which it is ſaid, that *he walked with God*, *Enoch* was the Husband of a Wife, the Father of Children, the Maſter of a numerous Family; nay, he was a Prince in his Generation, *the Seventh from Adam*, in the Line

Line of *Seth*; the eldeſt Son by deſcent, from the eldeſt houſe of *Seth*; one therefore, who in his time made no little Figure in the World, and was deeply engaged in the Affairs of Government, beyond all others, excepting his Father and Grandfather, and the Patriarchs, that were yet alive. *Enoch* then differed not from other Men, in any reſpect of Civil Affairs; he had ſuch Relations, and common Engagements, as other Men had; and in ſome reſpect more, being deſcended from *Seth* in the Patriarchal Line, which ſome believe was the Regal Line too, in one Diviſion of Mankind. But tho in theſe Circumſtances he differed not from other Men, otherwiſe than that his Affairs might be more Cumberſom than thoſe of ordinary Perſons; yet with reſpect to Religion and Virtue, to Faith in God, and an holy Life, he differed very much from the generality of Mankind; for in the midſt of all that Buſineſs and Converſation, which his place in the World engaged him in; *he walked with God*, he was a perfect man, and grew to that height of Piety and Righteouſneſs, that God thought fit to reward ſo eminent a Perſon, with tranſlating him alive from Earth

Earth to Heaven; a plain demonſtration againſt the Pretences of the *Roman* Church, That retirement in *Monaſteries*, and a ſingle life, are not neceſſary to the higheſt degree of Piety; that the beſt part of Religion is not to be coop'd up in a *Clayſter*, but to be ſeen in the World, and in the ordinary converſation of Men; That the moſt Excellent part of Devotion, that the beſt, and nobleſt degrees of Faith and Virtue, may be attained and exerciſed, and improved in a ſtate of Worldly Relations and Engagements; and that theſe things therefore ought not to be pretended in our excuſe for not *walking with God*, as *Enoch* did. Let me therefore add in the

2. Place, That we have the hope of the ſame reward to influence us, which *Enoch* had, though not of being tranſlated alive into a better World, yet of going thither by the common paſſage of death, which as to the ſubſtance of the reward is the ſame thing; the other circumſtance, ſo ſingular in the caſe of *Enoch*, being not altogether ſo much for his own ſake, as for the inſtruction of others. There were but two Perſons that went thus into a better World, *Enoch* one; For the inſtruction of a declining and degenerate age, almoſt

almoſt wholly ſunk into a worldly Life; *Elias* another, for an admonition to a very corrupt age too; the former when all things were running into licentiouſneſs, and diſorder amongſt the Patriarchs before the Law; the latter, when the time was as bad under the Law, and both theſe to maintain a ſenſe of God, and another World; while yet the revelation of a Future life, was not ſo clear and publick as it was made by our Lord Jeſus Chriſt, who *brought life and immortality to light*: And ſince he by his Doctrine, and by his Reſurrection, and his Aſcenſion into Heaven, hath given us ſuch evidence and notice of a life to come, that a more clear evidence could not have been reaſonably deſired, there is no need that the world under the Goſpel, ſhould be admoniſhed by ſuch extraordinary methods any more: Our bleſſed Lord himſelf was not tranſlated into Heaven, till after his death, and Reſurrection; he in all things going before us, ſhewing us by his example, not only what our duty is, but what, and in what manner our reward ſhall be conferred: we muſt die, and riſe again, and then aſcend to *the Heaven of Heavens*, for the conſummation of our reward; And having *this hope*, Let us *purify our ſelves, as*

he

he is pure; Having theſe promiſes, dearly beloved, let us cleanſe our ſelves from all filthineſs of Fleſh and Spirit, perfecting holineſs in the fear of God.

To conclude, We have the ſame God to ſerve and obey, that *Enoch* had; the ſame promiſes, and thoſe more publickly and ſolemnly made, and more ſtrongly confirmed to us, than ever they were to the Fathers; we have, I ſay, the ſame promiſes to excite us, that he had; and all the ſame advantages that he had, and in many reſpects much greater, through the Revelation of the Goſpel by our Lord Jeſus; and we are under no greater temptations and diſcouragements, than he met with; or if we were, the *grace of God is ſufficient for us*: and therefore let us *walk with God*, as he walked with him; that when that time cometh, of which *Enoch prophefied*, as Saint *Jude* reporteth, *v.* 14. That *the Lord ſhall come with ten thouſands of his Saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them, of all their ungodly deeds, which they have committed, and of all their hard Speeches which they have ſpoken againſt him*; we may lift up our heads with joy, and find mercy in that day.

THE

The Sixteenth Sermon.

JOB II. 10.

Shall we receive Good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive Evil.

THIS was part of *Job's* answer to that saying of his Wife in the former *verse*, *Dost thou still retain thy integrity? Curse God and dye.* She pretended that his Piety and Virtue were now discerned to be unprofitable, and that it was all one whether he blessed or cursed God; for if he cursed him, he could but dye, and it was better to dye than to live in such misery. To which he answered, *Thou speakest as one of the foolish Women speaketh. What, shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall*

we not receive evil? The *Idumean* Women, it is likely, were wont to rail at their Gods, when any great adverſity befel them; and *Job* told his Wife, that ſhe ſpake like one of them, but not like one that knew and worſhipped the true God: From whom it is reaſonable that we ſhould take all in good part, not only the good, but likewiſe the evil things of this life.

There are two things intimated in the Text, beſides what the words expreſs, and they are theſe.

1. Our life here is a mixture of Good and Evil. No man is wholly deprived of the comforts, nor any man perfectly exempted from the troubles of it. There is indeed a great variety in the mixture; The afflictions of ſome being as inconſiderable as the Enjoyments of others. But in ſome proportion all receive Good and Evil; nor is any Man's condition at a perfect ſtay: we change often for the better or the worſe. Sometimes from the bottom of adverſity we riſe to great happineſs; and at other times we fall as low; which was the caſe of *Job* beyond ordinary examples. All which is true, as well of Families and Nations, as of particular Perſons.

2. The

2. The Good we enjoy, and the Evil we ſuffer, are both from the hand of God. For his Providence always attends the working of ſecond cauſes, either diſpoſing them or permitting them to produce thoſe things that happen in the World. When the Air is healthy or infectious; when the Seaſons are Fruitful or unkindly; when the wind makes a Shipwrack, or when it brings the Ship ſafe into the Harbor; when we ſuffer by the malice and paſſions of others, or when they are taken in their own net and we eſcape; we are in all theſe and the like events to look farther then the immediate cauſes of the Good or the Evil, and to acknowledge the over-ruling Providence of God. Thus although they were the *Sabeans* and the *Caldeans* that ſlew *Job*'s Servants, and carried away his Cattel, though his Sheep were deſtroy'd by Lightning, and his Children by a Tempeſt that blew down the houſe upon them; yet he omitting, or not ſo much regarding the influence of theſe ſecond cauſes, applied himſelf to the conſideration of that Providence under which they all concurred to reduce him to this ſad ſtate; and *he fell down upon the ground and worſhipped, and ſaid, Naked came I out of my Mothers Womb, and naked ſhall I*

return thether; The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, bleſſed be the name of the Lord. Theſe are the two points intimated in the Text; That this preſent life is a ſtate of Good and of Evil, and that both are from the hand of God. But

3. The main ſcope of the words is, That we are to take all in good part from Divine Providence, and to receive *Evil* from God's hand as well as *Good*. Which is a duty neceſſary to be underſtood, and neceſſary to be practiſed by every one of us, both for the diſcharge of a good conſcience, and likewiſe for our own eaſe and comfort in this uncertain and miſerable World. I ſhall therefore in the firſt place illuſtrate the ſenſe of this paſſage, and ſhew what is meant by *receiving evil at the hand of God*; and then I ſhall propound to your conſideration ſome of thoſe many reaſons why we ſhould effectually perſwade our ſelves ſo to do.

As to the firſt, The manner of bearing Evil from the hand of God, is that which is meant by receiving it at his hand. Particularly,

1. We are to receive Evil with the ſame honourable thoughts of God, wherewith we are to receive Good from him. We

We muſt abate nothing of our eſteem of his Righteouſneſs, or of our belief of his Wiſdom and Goodneſs. The ſenſe of miſery is indeed apt to breed hard thoughts of all thoſe by whoſe means it comes, if they have knowingly contributed towards it, and deſigned what we ſuffer. But let us remember, Brethren, that this is a caſe always to be excepted. God knows and ſees all the troubles that befall us, nay and it is his Will that they ſhould happen to us, and yet we muſt not think the worſe of him for it. And though we take it ill of any man that can eaſily help us when we are in diſtreſs, and yet refuſes to do it; yet we ought not to be ſo affected towards God; and whilſt we complain of that grief from which, 'tis true, he could deliver us in one moment; we muſt at no hand complain of him, nor entertain the leaſt unworthy thought of him, for ſeeing us in pain and ſuffering us to continue under it.

2. We are to receive Evil with the ſame conſtancy of ſerveing and obeying him, as if we received nothing but good. We are not to grow weary of Religion, nor to give over Praying, nor to depart from Juſtice or Charity, or any duty incumbent on us. The truth is, they muſt be great ſtrangers to the ſpirit and deſign of

Chriſtianity who can be tempted to count their Prayers and their Repentance and Righteouſneſs unprofitable, when they do not ſave them from the calamities of this World. Under the Law, indeed, the promiſes whereof were Temporal, we may obſerve, the temptation prevail'd upon ſome good Men. *Verily*, ſaid *Aſaph*, *I have cleanſed my heart in vain, and waſhed my hands in Innocence. For all the day long have I been plagued, and chaſtned every morning*, Pſal. 73. 13, 14. But then he recover'd a better mind, *ver.* 21, 22. *Thus my heart was grieved, and I was pricked in my Reins; ſo fooliſh was I and ignorant, I was as a beaſt before thee.* It was this that *Job*'s Wife bad him do, *i.e.* to throw off all pretence to ſerve God, who had thus forſaken him; ſaid ſhe, *Curſe God and dye*; ſcorn to ſerve him any longer, and make an end of thy life. But ſaid he, *Thou ſpeakeſt as one of the fooliſh Women ſpeaketh; what, ſhall we receive Good at the hand of God, and ſhall we not receive Evil?* Nay,

3. We are to receive evil from God with thankfulneſs for the good things we have enjoyed, for thoſe which remain, and for thoſe which we expect; and above all, for the hope of Eternal Life. We muſt thank him for the care he takes of us, and there-

therefore for all his dealings with us, for ſending us that which he ſees is moſt expedient for us; yea, for thoſe very Trials and Chaſtiſements which we complain of, though for the preſent they are grievous. And thus *Job* received Evil. *The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away; Bleſſed be the name of the Lord.*

Theſe, I confeſs, ſeem to be hard leſſons, but they are ſuch as we muſt learn; and how hard ſoever they may be, yet let us be aſſured, that they are not unreaſonable; and that is the ſecond point I was to ſhew; and what I chiefly deſigned to inſiſt upon at preſent. Therefore,

1. We ſhould conſider, that we have not deſerved the Good that we receive from the hand of God; but the Evil which we receive, that we have abundantly deſerved. All, indeed, do not deſerve Evil from God equally; but all deſerve it more or leſs. And as for meriting good from him, that no man muſt pretend to, how Righteous and Godly ſoever he be. For if God ſhould be ſevere to mark what is amiſs, who could ſtand before him? If he ſhould enter into Judgment with his Servants, no fleſh living would be juſtified. Now

if *Job* who was a perfect and upright Man, a Man of extraordinary Piety and Virtue, received Evil from God as he ought, how much more ſhould we do ſo, that fall ſhort of his perfection? When we ſuffer affliction, our hearts muſt juſtifie God in all, becauſe they condemn us in ſo many things. Our own Conſciences are enough to ſtop our mouths, or rather to make us confeſs, that we have ſinned, but that God is Righteous: Eſpecially ſince all the good that we ever enjoyed, and do now enjoy, is from a holy and juſt God, who is of puret eyes than to behold iniquity. For if we who are obnoxious to his Purity and Juſtice, have yet received innumerable benefits from him, it is hard and unreaſonable to complain of him, though but in our thoughts, that he ſometimes lets us feel a little of his anger, and puts us in mind of our ſins, and of his own Juſtice; and that as he is a gracious and a bountiful, ſo he is withal a Holy God. Which conſideration ſhould prevail the more, becauſe

2. God has abſolute Authority over us, and ſo is every way juſt in correcting us for our offences; not only becauſe we have done that which deſerves Puniſhment, but becauſe alſo he has a juſt and rightful

rightful Power to puniſh us for it. Tho a Man knows that he has done ill, yet every body muſt not take upon him to give him correction. A Servant will ſubmit to his Maſter, and a Child to his Father, and a Subject to the Magiſtrate, when they will not bear Puniſhment from every hand, as there is no reaſon that they ſhould. How much more ſhould we ſubmit to the Chaſtiſement of the Almighty, who is the Father of Spirits, and our Soveraign Lord, upon whom we abſolutely depend, becauſe he made us out of nothing, and ſuſtains us every moment that we live? When we were born, we brought nothing with us into the World, but have lived ever ſince upon the good things, which God of his bounty hath lent us for our uſe. And if he for good reaſons takes them away, he does us no wrong, for they are not ours, otherwiſe than by his continual Gift. Which conſideration diſpoſed *Job* to ſubmit, when he was diveſted of all. *Naked came I out of my Mothers Womb, and naked ſhall I return thither.* To the Earth from whence I was taken. *The Lord gave, &c.* Let us remember that no Lord has that right over his Servant, nor Parent in his Child, which God has in us all; and that ſince there

there is no obligation like to that which we have to God that made us, nor any Authority that one can have over another, equal to that which he has over us; there is great Reason why we should meekly submit to his Chastisements, and be content to receive not only that good which we have not deserved, but that evil also which we have deserved at his Hand. But this is not all: For,

3. To confess the Truth, when the Evils of this Life happen, they are for the most part very necessary, and may be always very profitable to us.

They make us to reflect upon our Sins, and they dispose us to Repentance. For a great truth it is, and we may happily know it by experience, That 'tis our way to do many things in our Prosperity, which trouble us in our Adversity. When *Joseph*'s Brethren were brought into Distress themselves, then they could say, *Verily, we are guilty concerning our Brother;—— and therefore is this distress come upon us.* Our faults do not much trouble us when we have nothing else to give us disturbance, and in this case affliction does well to bring us to a sense of them.

Again,

Again, We are not ſo apt to feel our need of dependance upon God, when all things that we can deſire are round about us. We muſt confeſs to our ſhame, that Piety and Proſperity are ſeldom found together in a great degree both of the one and the other. When we are full, we are apt to forget God; but in our affliction we ſeek him early. Not but that a man may grow more impious under the chaſtiſement of God, as *Ahab* did. But then this was left as a mark of infamy upon him, that in his diſtreſs he *waxed worſe and worſe. This is that King Ahab.*

We ſhould conſider alſo, that the troubles of this life teach us *patience*, a quality very neceſſary for us in this World. It is undoubtedly true, that continual eaſe and fulneſs, and enjoying all that we would have, incline us to be ſoft, and hard to be pleaſed. Every little thing almoſt is enough to put us into a paſſion; and if God ſhould always let us alone, we ſhould make great troubles to our ſelves, out of the ſmalleſt diſappointments. And when afflictions happen to us in good earneſt, our very impatience is an argument that we needed them to bring us to Wiſdom and a good temper. God's trials make us able to bear what once we could not; they

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correct the Intemperance of our desires, and give us a firmness of Mind; they bring our contentment within a narrow compass, and make it more easie for us to be happy than it was before; and therefore says St. *Paul, We glory in tribulation, knowing that tribulation worketh Patience, Rom.* 5. 3.

By the same reason they disengage our affections from worldly things, more than we are well able to do it without them. For 'tis indulgence that makes us fond of the Pleasures of this World; but when any one of them is taken away, we must learn to be content without it; and by satisfying our selves when we have lost one, we learn to moderate our desires about the rest, which is a good that recompences all the grief we endure in the way to it.

Especially since it leads to another good thing, which is the moderating of our Love to this Life it self; which when we feel to be made up of Care and Trouble, as well as Mirth and Pleasure, we grow more reconciled to the thoughts of Death, which puts an end as well to the Troubles as to the Delights of this World,

All which things tend to the greatest good of all, even our Eternal Salvation; to

to which we ſhould add, That whatever Duties are neceſſary to this great end, we ſhall perform them moſt carefully; For when by experience we are convinced how fooliſh a thing it is, to think of finding a complete Happineſs in this World, or indeed any thing that deſerves the Name of Happineſs; we ſhall ſeek for a more ſolid and enduring ſubſtance. For we muſt needs be more ſollicitous to ſecure that Reſt and Happineſs, which God hath Promiſed in a better Life, when we are ſatisfied that no ſuch thing is to be obtained here: we are not ſo deeply affected with the danger of worldly enjoyments as with the uncertainty of them; They are indeed apt to corrupt our minds, but we do not uſe to be jealous of them upon that account; but when we loſe them, we are eaſily ſenſible that they are not to be truſted, and that if we would be wiſe for our ſelves, we muſt take off our minds from theſe periſhing things, and grow wiſe to Salvation.

To conclude this Point, The evils of Life do not only offer good conſiderations to our minds, but they are proper means to put us into a conſidering Temper, and to make us capable of underſtanding the full weight of them. They cure

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us of the Levity and Easiness of Mind, which grows out of Ease and Luxury, and indispoſes us to dwell for any long time upon wise and profitable thoughts.

Finally, The Patience and the Godly manner of bearing Evils, and the good use we make of them, worketh the increase of our reward, especially if we *endure grief, suffering wrongfully*, and most of all if we *suffer for righteousness sake*. This is that which St. *Peter* makes no doubt to say is *thank worthy*; and it turns so greatly to our account, that instead of mentioning it as a thing fit to discourage and deject his Disciples, our Saviour bid them to *rejoice*, and to be *exceeding glad, for*, saies he, *great is your reward in heaven*.

4. As the Evils of this Life are for our good, so God means and designs them for our good too. There is not any one good use which may be made of them but God intends it, when he sends them; and 'tis our own fault if we do not grow the better for them. *David* found by experience that it was *good for* him that he *was afflicted*; and he confessed that God in *very faithfulness* had afflicted him, (*i. e.*) meaning all the advantage to him which he had gained. For that reason

reason it is said, *God does not afflict willingly, nor grieve the children of men*; not merely to make us feel Pain and Trouble, but because our good requires it. Physick is sometimes as necessary for us as Food; and tho it be bitter, we do not think the worse of him that Administers it, because it is administred for our Health, either for the cure or for the prevention of a Disease. And should we take it in ill part from God, when for the health and improvement of our Souls, he gives us wholesome, though sharp Medicines? He gives us Food, Raiment, Plenty, Peace and Health, that we might in the midst of these good things serve him with thankfulness; and the greatest cause we have to rejoice in them, is that they are of his sending, who intended them not for Snares, but for Blessings to us. When therefore he takes any of them away, he does it with the same good meaning either to correct what is bad, or to perfect that which is good in us; the best reason of our rejoicing continues still, which is, that God still exercises a Paternal care over us, as a Father corrects the Faults of his Child because he loves him, and would have him do better for the time to come. We are therefore to take all

all in good part, the evil as well as good, that comes from God's Hand, becauſe 'tis all meant in good part to us. Eſpecially if we conſider,

5. That he is not, and cannot be miſtaken in judging what kind of Evil, or what degree of Evil is expedient for our good. Let that which happens, be of what kind it will, and how great ſoever it be in the kind, yet from his Infinite Wiſdom we ought to conclude againſt all objections, That all things conſidered, it is the beſt for us. We perhaps do not ſee how it ſhould be ſo, but we have not the leſs reaſon to believe it. God's thoughts are above ours, and his ways above our ways; and we are not to argue as if we underſtood our ſelves as well as God underſtands us. Our buſineſs is to ſubmit to him patiently, and to depend upon him intirely, and to thank him from our hearts for his continual Providence over us; Acknowledging that we are not fit to be humour'd in all our deſires, neither to enjoy Pleaſure longer than he ſees 'tis for our good, nor to ſay with what pain we ſhould be chaſtiſed, or with what Trouble we ſhould be exerciſed; we are not wiſe enough to be our own chuſers; and we cannot be better than by being in God's Hands. 6. We

6. We ſhould take Evil at God's hand in good part, becauſe he is not wanting to ſupply us with ſtrength to bear it, and to ſupport us with comforts of a better kind than thoſe he takes away. If he makes us more conformable to his will, we get a better Conſcience than we had before, and that will of it ſelf enable us to go through many and great Troubles of this Life. If he leſſens our Love of this World, and increaſes our Faith and Hope of a better Life, and fixes our thoughts upon Heaven more than they were wont to be; if he inſpires us with a greater ſenſe of his Love, and gives us more and more of his Holy Spirit; then although here are Worldly Evils to be born, yet there are alſo ſuch Spiritual conſolatives to ſupport us under them, that we have more reaſon to be thankful than to complain. *God will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able, but will with the temptation*, &c. ſo the Apoſtle aſſur'd the Chriſtians, and were themſelves examples of it; none ever went through greater Troubles and Perſecutions than they, but they do not ſpeak of themſelves as objects of Pity. He ſays they were ſtrengthned with all might according to God's Glorious Power, unto

all Patience and Long-ſuffering with joyfulneſs, *Col.* 1. 11. They were indeed *troubled on every ſide, yet not diſtreſſed; perplexed, but not in deſpair; Perſecuted, but not forſaken; caſt down, but not deſtroyed; ſorrowful, yet always rejoicing*, 1 Cor. iv. 8. vi. 10.

7. We are to conſider that the Troubles of this Life are not always Puniſhments, but ſometimes Trials. In which caſe they admit of great comforts; and therefore St. *James* ſays, *My Brethren, count it joy, when ye fall into divers temptations*, *James* 1. 2. where by *temptations* he underſtands thoſe Troubles that from time to time befell the Chriſtians, for their profeſſion, and proved their ſincerity; for ſo 'tis explained in the following words, *knowing this, that the trial of your Faith worketh patience.* Such were the afflictions of *Job*, as we ſee by the circumſtances of his ſtory. God had given this teſtimony to him, That he was a *perfect and an upright man, one that feared God, and eſchewed evil.* But Satan anſwer'd, *Doth Job fear God for nought? Haſt thou not made an hedge about him, and about his houſe, and about all that he hath on every ſide? Thou haſt bleſſed the work of his hands, and his ſubſtance is increaſed in the land.*

* *But*

But put forth thy hand now, and touch all that he hath, and he will curſe thee to thy face. Thus the Devil charged *Job*, and in him all Religious men, That his pretence to Piety was mere flattery, not proceeding from a hearty love to God, but from the Love of Worldly proſperity. Now though the event ſhewed the falſeneſs of the Devils ſuggeſtion; yet thus far he was in the right, That affliction tries whether a man be a mere mercenary pretender to Religion, or whether he be an upright man, fearing God, and eſchewing evil. For he that pretends Religion, pretends to ſerve God, and to depend upon him in all conditions of Life, and that God is more to him than all the World beſides. But the reality of this can never be ſo well ſeen as when we do his will, and bleſs his name, even when he deprives us of the good things, and ſends us the afflictions of this Life. We ſhould therefore receive evil from God's hand as well as good, though we were as perfect as *Job* was, in fearing God and eſchewing evil; becauſe though it does not befall us in ſuch a caſe as a Puniſhment, yet it comes as a tryal, and there are weighty reaſons for Patience under it; For (1.) it is exceedingly for the Honour of God and Religi-

on, if we acquit our ſelves well in bearing it. This ſhews the ſincerity and the power of our Faith; and that Religion is a Principle of the trueſt Fortitude and Fidelity, when no worldly loſs, nor outward pain can hinder us from bleſſing God, and perſevering in our Duty; the World will ſee that we are very ſure we ſerve a good Maſter, and one whom we believe nothing ought to deter or diſcourage us from obeying, not death it ſelf, nor vexations worſe than death. Hereby we declare that without all this Worlds good, he alone is ſufficient for our reward; that there is no evil like loſing his favour, no good like keeping it. (2.) It will make alſo for our own Comfort; for although without this, a good man may have reaſonable aſſurance of his own integrity, *i. e.* by an equal Care to do his Duty in all reſpects, while God makes an hedg about him on every ſide; yet it cannot be denied that he muſt needs have yet a more comfortable aſſurance of it, when he goes on to depend upon God under the hardeſt preſſures of affliction. For this is the higheſt Point of Religion, and therefore proves our ſincerity in all the reſt. Upon this trial we cannot doubt but that it was for God's ſake, that we abſtain'd from

from Drunkenneſs and Theft, and hard dealing, and Luſt and Uncleanneſs; that in pure Conſcience and with Pious affections we offer'd up our daily Prayers, and Bleſſed God for all his gifts, and obſerved his Laws. For no other Principle can make a man perſevere in Religious dependence upon him, when he is not bribed with the Proſperity of this World. The Truth is, that all the Virtues that are exerciſed while every thing goes well with us as heart can wiſh, are ſomething neceſſary for our welfare in this World, if we go wiſely to work for it. A liar will not be believed, a falſe man will not be truſted, drunkards will hardly thrive, a malicious and hard-hearted man will be hated, and he that does not Worſhip God ſhall be reproached. The Vices and impieties of humane Life are enemies to our well-doing in this World; affecting either our Bodies or our Eſtates, or our Quiet, or our Reputation; ſo that the very Love of this World will teach a wiſe man to Live well and Religiouſly in appearance, that he may fare the better for it here. But when God ſends thoſe evils that our Piety is ſo far from hindring, that is does expoſe us to them, and yet we go on to Bleſs and Serve him, this

puts it out of all queſtion, that we are really and in earneſt what we ſeem to be, the Faithful Servants of God, as God ſpeaking after the manner of men, ſaid to *Abraham*, when he offer'd up his Son *Iſaac*, *Now I know that thou feareſt God, becauſe thou haſt not with-held thy Son, thy only Son from me.*

Thus I have laid down ſome Conſiderations very uſeful, I am perſuaded, to prepare us for all the Portion of Evil which God may think fit to ſend upon any of us in this World; that whenever any of it happens, we may follow the example of *Job*, and receive evil from God's hand, as well as good.

But then, Brethren, we muſt remember that ſuch things as theſe are to be thought of very much before, or we ſhall be little better for them when once adverſity happens. For 'tis not barely knowing nor hearing them, but 'tis much conſidering them, that muſt make them Principles within us, and fortifie us againſt all ſurprizes.

It is a great miſtake that theſe thoughts muſt make us melancholly, and ſpoil that reaſonable comfort we ſhould take in the good things which God lends us for our uſe. For while we enjoy them without

without overvaluing them, we have all that they are good for; and they are not the leſs pleaſant, becauſe we know of greater Bleſſings than they are; our part is to uſe them thankfully, while they are ours, for our uſe; and by all Prudent means, as far as lawfully we can, to keep off Adverſity; becauſe then we may be ſure that thoſe evils which befall us without our own faults, are moſt properly of Gods ſending. And ſo we ſhall feel our ſelves under the Power of all thoſe reaſons why we ſhould with ſubmiſſion and thankfulneſs *receive not only good, but evil alſo at the hand of God.*

The Seventeenth Sermon.

ROM. VIII. Part of 34, and 35. *v.*

It is God that juſtifieth: who is he that condemneth?

THESE words ſignify one of theſe things; Either that when God juſtifies, no man will condemn; but that when we are ſure of pleaſing him, we are ſure of pleaſing all too; or elſe that if he approves and juſtifies, it is no great matter, nor ſhould we be much concerned by whom we are accuſed or condemned.

But the firſt cannot be the meaning, that no man condemns whom God juſtifies: For the Diſciples of Chriſt were uſed in that manner, that St. *Paul* applied this ſaying to their caſe, *v*, 36. *For thy ſake*

ſake are we killed all the day long, we are appointed as ſheep for the ſlaughter.

He means therefore That if God juſtifies, it is not conſiderable who condemns. They were brought before the Tribunals of men, where grievous things were laid to their charge; yet becauſe God ſaw their Innocence, ſays the Apoſtle, *who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect?* They were dealt with as Malefactors, yet ſays he, *Who is he that condemneth?* ſo that he ſuppoſes them to be condemned by no body, in compariſon, becauſe while they were condemned by men, God Juſtified them.

Which offers two Points to be conſidered.

1. That men do ſometimes condemn thoſe whom God juſtifies. (2.) That they whom God juſtifies have no cauſe to be dejected when they are condemned by men.

1. That men do ſometimes condemn thoſe whom God juſtifies; and they condemn them too for the ſake of thoſe things which he approves, and lay that to their charge which he is now pleaſed with, and will hereafter reward. It was

ſuch

ſuch a caſe which our Saviour prepared his Diſciples for, when he ſaid, *Bleſſed are ye when men ſhall revile you and perſecute you, and ſay all manner of evil falſly againſt you for my ſake*: Which began to be fulfilled as ſoon as ever the World took notice of them. And here let us briefly conſider what kind of Perſons they then were, and how they were uſed.

The Apoſtles, and thoſe that were in fellowſhip with them, profeſſed the ſincere and uncorrupted Truth of the Goſpel, teaching all Purity and Virtue, and whatever they received in Command from our Lord Jeſus. Nor will any Chriſtian of what other Name ſoever, pretend that there was too much or too little, in their Doctrine. All are agreed, not only that Chriſtianity is worthy of all acceptation; but alſo that it was by them profeſſed intirely and without mixture. As to their manners, they were Perſons of the greateſt ſimplicity, eaſie to be known what they were, given to no deceit, deſiring to Live in quiet, becauſe there was nothing in their Doctrine, or in their way of Life, to create jealouſies in others. It was a very great part of their Religion to deny themſelves, and to do good to their Neighbours. They did not aim at

Worldly

Worldly power and greatneſs, but inſtead of uſing that intereſt they had in the People to ſave themſelves by Violence from Perſecution; they urged ſubjection to Laws and Government upon Principles of Conſcience. They were ſuch kind of men, and we doubt not but God juſtified them.

Let us therefore ſee how they were uſed by men, by *Jews* and *Gentiles*. As for the *Jews*, it was not indeed very likely that they ſhould be treated much better than their Maſter had been before. And ſo the event ſhewed; 'tis true they made many Converts, and a great part of the People cleaved to their Doctrine and fellowſhip; but this enraged their enemies ſo much the more; and the more numerous that Chriſtians grew, there were ſo many more to be hated and reviled, and perſecuted: For

1. They were charged with Hereſie, and repreſented as a Sect that ſubſiſted upon the Profeſſion of new and falſe Doctrines. For thus we find St. *Paul* obliged to apologize for himſelf before *Fælix*, againſt the accuſations of the *Jews*; *They cannot*, ſays he, *prove the things whereof they now accuſe me. But this I confeſs unto*

unto thee, That after the way which they call hereſie, ſo worſhip I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law, and in the prophets (Acts 24.14.). *And have hope towards God, which they themſelves allow, That there ſhall be a reſurrection of the dead. And herein do I exerciſe my ſelf, to have always a conſcience void of offence towards God and men.* St. *Paul*, and ſuch as he, believed all things that were written in the Law and the Prophets, thoſe very writings which the *Jews* themſelves acknowledged to be Divine; and tho to this Faith, they added the Doctrine and Practice of a good life, yet they were eſteemed Hereticks, becauſe they undertookto ſee with their own eyes, and to judg for themſelves, inſtead of ſubmitting to the Authority of the Council that had betrayed and murdered the Lord *Jeſus*.

2. They were accuſed of Sedition too, as if they deſigned to make Stirs and Commotions, and to alienate the people from their Governours. Thus when *Paul* and *Silas* had converted a multitude of Devout *Greeks*, and not a few of the Chief Women at *Theſſalonica*, the *Jews* who believed not, moved with Envy, took unto 'em certain lewd fellows of the baſer ſort, and drew ſome of the Brethren to

the Rulers, crying, *Theſe that have turned the world upſide down, are come hither alſo, who do contrary to the decrees of Cæſar, ſaying, That there is another King, one Jeſus*, Acts 17. 5, 6. And yet they never made one ſtep by word or deed, towards depoſing Princes, and changing Governments. Jeſus, indeed, who had commanded them to pay Tribute unto *Cæſar*, had alſo forbidden them to be of the Religion which *Cæſar* was then of; and this was drawn into an accuſation of Faction and Diſloyalty. Thus alſo the ſame St. *Paul* being brought before *Felix* at *Jeruſalem*, the *Jews* complained by *Tertullian* their Orator, That they *had found him a peſtilent fellow, and a mover of ſedition among all the Jews throughout the world, and a ringleader of the ſect of the Nazarenes*, Acts 24. 5.

3. They concluded them under a ſentence of Damnation, as far as they could do it. Indeed they would have it thought ſo impoſſible for a Chriſtian to be ſaved, that ſome of them after being converted to Chriſtianity, were ſtrongly perſwaded, that they ſtill ought to keep the Law of *Moſes*, and would have mingled *Judaiſm* and Chriſtianity together; as if there was no hope of Salvation out of the

the Synagogue: *Except ye be circumciſed after the manner of* Moſes, *ye cannot be ſaved*, Acts 15. 1.

4. As 'tis uſual in ſuch caſes, to damn firſt, and then to kill, they delivered the Diſciples of Chriſt to death, and pretended the ſervice of God for it. For which we may take thoſe remarkable words of St. *Paul*, deſcribing the temper of the *Jews* then, and what his own once was. Says he, *I was taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye are at this day. And I perſecuted them even unto the death, binding and delivering into priſons both men and women*, Acts 22. 3, 4. And in chap. 26. v. 10, 11. he declares, That he *perſecuted them oft in every ſynagogue, and compelled them to blaſpheme; and being exceedingly mad againſt them, he perſecuted them even into ſtrange cities.*

Such was the entertainment they had from the *Jews*, to whom the Word of Salvation was firſt delivered: But when it was carried amongſt the *Gentiles*, they condemned it too. For,

1. It was run down, as if it had brought Irreligion and Atheiſm into the World; Inſomuch that the Ancient Apologiſts

logiſts were fain in good earneſt to ſet themſelves againſt this abſurd accuſation, and to ſhew that it was not all one to ſerve God at all, and not to ſerve many Gods; That there might be devotion without bowing down to Images; and Religion and Worſhip without Idolatry; and better a great deal without theſe things than with them.

2. It was exclaimed againſt as a late upſtart Religion, that began but yeſterday, and was fitter to be hiſſed than argued out of the World. They uſed to ask the Chriſtians what ſort of men they could name, either *Greeks* or *Barbarians*, that made their Profeſſion, and had their Rites and Worſhip, before *Jeſus* appeared. You have forſaken, ſay they, the Cuſtoms of the Fathers, that had been obſerved of Old time in all Cities and Countries; you have revolted from a Worſhip, which has had the Tradition of all Ages; and the approbation of Kings and People, Law makers and Philoſophers, and by almoſt all the World, till ſuch as you appeared, who are but of yeſterday.

3. They try to overwhelm it with the moſt groſs and palpable untruths; they gave it out that the Chriſtians were worſhippers of the Sun; nay, that they adored

or

an Aſſes-head, and ſometimes a Croſs: They did not ſtick to ſay, That in their ſolemn Aſſemblies they killed a Child, and committed Inceſt. They alſo upon no occaſion in the world, diſarm'd them as a ſeditious and diſloyal People, and accuſed them of Treaſon, tho none ever ſet better examples of Fidelity to their Governors.

To conclude: Our Predeceſſors of the Primitive Church, were now and then condemned to ſeveral ſorts of deaths; and it was often a great deal more ſafe to be ſome notorious Malefactor, than to be a Chriſtian.

In a word: The Goſpel met with that Oppoſition, which no Religion ever did before. The Gods of other Nations, new Gods every day were admitted into a Temple at *Rome* with ſome Formality, and without Trouble. But when the Diſciples of Jeſus came to call men to the Worſhip of the only true God, and Jeſus Chriſt whom he had ſent; *Jews* and *Gentiles* conſpired to extinguiſh their Religion, and to blot out their name for ever; inſomuch that the *Jews* at *Rome* could tell St. *Paul*, *As concerning this ſect, we know that it is every where ſpoken againſt.* Thoſe therefore whom God juſtifies, have been, and may be condemned

by men: Which will not ſeem ſtrange to any of us, if we conſider what the Cauſes of it are. For inſtance;

1. That hatred of truth which reigns in a great part of mankind. They cannot bear ſound Doctrine, nor can they therefore bear thoſe that profeſs and practiſe it; truth is againſt them, and therefore they will be againſt the truth, and all that follow it. So long as Pride, Luſt, Avarice, Revenge, Luxury, and ſuch things remain, there will be ſo many cauſes of condemning that which God approves. To which we muſt add,

2. The inflexibleneſs of true Doctrine, and of thoſe that maintain it, to the deſigns of worldly men. Chriſtianity was ſaid to be a perfect Scheme of Religion, that would ſuffer no additions or alterations. It was ſtiff, and would not bend to the pleaſure of Prieſts or of States-men; as all that would, which the Heathens called Religion among themſelves. Whilſt it was kept in wiſe and honeſt hands, and truly repreſented, there was no room for Cheating, no Allowances for Pious Frauds, no place for convenient Inventions: Innovations could not be brought into the Faith of Chriſtians, or the Subſtance of their Worſhip but they would be corruptions of both; without tampering with

with it, it could not ſerve the ambition of a few, to the prejudice of all others. And therefore while it was pure, they could not bear it, whoſe gain was their Godlineſs, and who had been uſed to tell lies in hypocriſie.

3. The proneneſs of mankind to Superſtition, is another cauſe of diſapproving what God approves. The true Diſciples of Chriſt are, according to their Religion, for a plain Faith, a pure and ſimple Worſhip, and for a few Myſteries, no more than God has made; and for making Charity and Purity the end of all theſe. But generally ſpeaking, people are for being ſaved by a multitude of Ceremonies, with a Prieſt to adminiſter them. They love to be amuſed, and to have their imaginations entertained with Myſteries that they do not underſtand, and then to believe that their Souls have received a great deal of good by it. On the other ſide, Chriſtianity does very little gratifie the Fancy, and labours very much to inform the Underſtanding; and therefore has been thought a Religion fit only for Philoſophers, being not accommodated enough to the vulgar, unleſs it were dreſſed out with more Myſtery and Pageantry. But then the Ancient Fathers made no doubt to call it a Philoſophy,

and ſuch a one as was deſigned to make Plowmen and vulgar Perſons, Philoſophers, *i. e.* to cure them of Superſtition, and to inform their minds with the knowledg of the moſt profitable Truths. This is the true buſineſs of Chriſtian Prieſts, not to make gain to themſelves by deceiving people that were to be deceived, nor to get power and dependencies by thoſe Doctrines whereby the people get eaſe, and liberty, and ignorance; but inſtead of nouriſhing and encouraging, to repreſs and correct the proneneſs of mankind to Superſtition.

4. Theſe two oppoſite infirmities, a fondneſs of any thing that is new on the one hand, and a paſſionate zeal for that which has ſome Antiquity on the other, do by turns promote this miſchief. Some Errors have very ſucceſsfully taken place at firſt, when they were entertainments to thoſe that loved Novelty; and the ſame Errors in proceſs of time, are hugged by others, becauſe they have the appearance of great Antiquity. They are few in compariſon, that had not rather be told what is Late, and what is Ancient, than what is True. To which we may add,

6. The vaſt influence that prejudice and prepoſſeſſion has upon mens underſtandings; which is very often ſo great, that

that it will not allow any thing to be ſaid on the other ſide, and ſo Condemns him that offers Truth before he is heard; or if a hearing cannot be avoided, it is able ſometimes to divert the attention; or if attention be given, it can corrupt the Judgment. Men in thoſe circumſtances are but ill Judges, whatever their natural abilities are. They love one ſide of the Queſtion, they hate the other; and they Judge accordingly.

6. In many Perſons, the impatience of conſidering and weighing things, and the eaſe of letting others Judge for them, without examining particulars, is the cauſe of falſe Judgment. For the eaſe that a man gets this way, inclines him to believe that there are Judges who cannot Err, and will be ſure to tell him nothing but Truth; and this diſpoſition is a mighty friend to thoſe that pretend to ſo high an Authority, becauſe it gives them an opportunity to ſay what they liſt, and to determine what they pleaſe. Whoever therefore comes with truth on the other hand, againſt an Authority that muſt not be thought capable of miſtaking, 'tis like to be welcome neither to thoſe that teach, nor to thoſe that are taught; for in effect he comes to the former to tell them that they muſt quit

their power, and to the latter that they muſt quit their eaſe.

Theſe are ſome of the cauſes of mens condemning thoſe whom God juſtifies; by which it appears that it is an Evil which comes of Evil. And the concluſion we are to make of them, it is this: That we do by no means ſquare our profeſſions and our actions, by ſo falſe a rule as that of pleaſing men, and gaining the favour and good words of men; for they may and they often have, and I doubt not but they often will condemn thoſe whom God juſtifies; and by the ſame reaſon they will Juſtifie thoſe whom God Condemns. To get Favour, and to avoid Diſgrace, is a happineſs which he that ſcorns, is not wiſe; but 'tis no rule for a man to Live by; and he that makes it ſo, cannot be honeſt. Man may Condemn thoſe whom God juſtifies, That is the firſt Point. The ſecond is this,

2. That to be condemned by man, is tolerable, if God Juſtifies. A Truth ſo clear, That more words cannot make it clearer, but they may ſerve to faſten it more upon our Minds. Let us conſider ſuch things as theſe,

1. The Infinite diſproportion between God and man; St. *Paul*'s meaning was, that God Juſtifies, and man Condemns; and to ſhew that in compariſon no body condemned

condemned in this caſe, he puts his meaning into the form of a Queſtion; It is God that Juſtifies, *who is he that condemns?* A wiſe man will not be much troubled to be rail'd at by a Slave, if he be honoured by a King.

2. We can certainly tell how to pleaſe God, becauſe we know what profeſſion, and what practice he approves; for he hath told us what they are, and we may believe him. We are ſecure alſo that what will pleaſe him to day, will do ſo to morrow; and that what he accounts good ſervice now, he will always reckon to be ſo. For God changes not, and can by no means contradict himſelf; He conceals no part of our Duty from us, and therefore to gain his Favour, we need not go forward and backward, nor contradict our ſelves neirher. If we ſtudy to approve our ſelves to God, as we have but one Lord to pleaſe, ſo he is ever conſtant to himſelf; our way is one, and plain; and our rule the ſame yeſterday, to day and for ever.

3. God knows the very ſecrets of our hearts, and the ſprings of all our actions; and therefore they whom God juſtifies, are truly worthy. He that can bear the allſeeing Eye of God, is in reality all that he appears to be; he is that Juſt,

Faithful and Unbiaſſed man, and he has that pure and clear mind, which if we could ſee with our Bodily Eyes, we ſhould, as *Plato* fancied, be ready to fall down and Worſhip it. Man juſtifies only by the outward appearance, and ſometimes happens to be pleaſed with profeſſion and ſervice, where nothing is meant of that which is ſo well taken. A Knave and a Hypocrite may win thanks from man; but where God Juſtifies, there is Faithfulneſs and Integrity; and whoever Condemns ſuch a one, diſgraces himſelf more than him.

4. If God juſtifies us, our own hearts do at the ſame time acquit and abſolve us; ſays St. *John*, *If our hearts condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God.* And 'tis true on the other ſide, that if God condemns us not, then have we confidence of our ſelves. By doing thoſe things that pleaſe him, we are ſure to pleaſe our ſelves: By making him our Friend, we ſhall infallibly make one Friend more, and that is our own Conſciences, which is infinitely more to us, than the opinion of the World. 'Tis a plain caſe, that we approve our ſelves to God by following Truth and Goodneſs; and this we know will put us upon ſtruggling with our own Judgment, and ſtraining points againſt our clear knowledge of what

what we ought to do. All the while we are gaining his Favour, we are ſure we do well; and when we have done it, we ſhall thank our ſelves, inſtead of being plagued with a ſad and black remembrance of the way we took to get it. *Acquaint now thy ſelf with God and be at peace with him, and ſo ſhall good come unto thy Soul.*

5. There lies no Flattery, nor falſe Accuſation, nor outward accident againſt us, to put us out of God's Favour, or to make us loſe what we have wrought, to turn his mind, or to blot our ſervices out of his remembrance. No change of Fortune ſhall bring us into diſgrace; which conſideration St. *Paul* laid great ſtrength upon in purſuance of the Text. *Who ſhall ſeparate us from the love of Chriſt? ſhall tribulation, or diſtreſs, or perſecution, or famine, or nakedneſs, or peril, or ſword? v.* 35. *I am perſuaded*, ſays he, *that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things preſent, nor things to come; nor heigth nor depth, nor any other creature, ſhall be able to ſeparate us from the love of God which is in Chriſt Jeſus our Lord, v.* 38. Nay ſays the Apoſtle, *in all theſe things we are more than Conquerors*; that is, we get by being Condemned by others, becauſe by that we are made more dear to God, who will conſider not only, that we ſerved him, but under what diſcouragements from the World, we did ſo. Laſtly. 6.

6. Whom *God juſtifies, them he alſo glorifies. For whom he did foreknow, he alſo did predeſtinate to be conformed to the Image of his Son, that he might be the firſt-born among many brethren*, v. 29, 30. *i.e.* Thoſe whom he foreknew to be his moſt faithful ſervants, he did before time decree, that by ſuffering for righteouſneſs, they ſhould follow ſo glorious a Pattern as their Elder Brother the Lord *Jeſus. Moreover, whom he did predeſtinate, them he alſo called*, (*i.e.*) he brought them to the profeſſion of the truth in a hazardous time, that they ſhould ſhew their Integrity; *and whom he called, them he alſo juſtified; and whom he juſtified, them he alſo glorified.* Which is ſo ſure, that the Apoſtle mentions it as if it were done already. Then he proceeds in the following verſes, *What ſhall we ſay to theſe things? If God be for us, who can be againſt us? He that ſpared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how ſhall he not with him freely give us all things? who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that juſtifies, who is he that condemneth? It is Chriſt that died, yea rather that is riſen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who alſo maketh interceſſion for us.* The concluſion is this, That whoever Condemns, we are not to be diſcouraged, if God juſtifies.

But it may be ſaid, That all this is very

ry true indeed, but it ſerves the turn of all Parties, even of thoſe who are moſt ſeverely Condemned by each other, while each of them pretends to have God and Truth on their ſide: And therefore that this Subject might have been more uſefully purſued, by ſhewing particularly what that Faith and that Practice is, with which they muſt be qualified whom God juſtifies; and how we are aſſured of it. Now I conſidered all this at firſt; but then I knew that I was to ſpeak to perſons who are neither ignorant of the Doctrine of this Church, nor of the evidence whereby it appears to be the very Truth of Chriſtianity; by which, whoever Governs himſelf in Worſhipping God, in behaving himſelf to others, and in all his ways, ſhall be aſſuredly Juſtified of God, though all the World ſhould Condemn him for it. But I conſidered alſo, that of all things which are apt to ſhake the conſtancy of modeſt Perſons, nothing is more likely to do it, than the mighty confidence wherewith they of the *Roman* Church Condemn us, and Exclaim againſt us. For to thoſe who are acquainted with the Hiſtory of the World, and of the Church, it muſt needs be a ſurprize, that men who are ſaid to be Learned, and known to be Zealous, do pronounce againſt us with no leſs ſeverity than if we were mere Infidels;

dels; One would think there must be some deep reason for it, when they make us nothing at all, and themselves all in all. For thus they will not allow that we are a Church, or that we have any certainty so much as of that True Doctine we profess; for they know us better than we do our selves, and as for our Salvation they are as sure it belongs not to us, till we are converted to them, as if they kept the Keys of Heaven. Nor do they sink us more than they raise themselves, who are not only a Church, but the whole Church, and not only not deceived, but even Infallible. They talk as if there were no safety with us, and no danger with them; which may raise such doubts in weaker minds, that I thought it not unseasonable to bring to your remembrance how violently the Apostles and their Christian Brethren were Condemned by men, of whom yet these men will grant that they were justified of God.

If it shall be said, This is a common-place Argument, of which all men serve themselves. I Answer, That the Argument is so much the stronger. For if these men themselves will tell you, that confidence is not to be trusted, you will, I hope, make this application, That neither is their confidence to be trusted; and therefore that

you

you ought to consider what they are, before you believe them to be what they call themselves; and examin what they teach, before you think the worse of your selves, for what they call you: And this is all that we desire of you, That you would weigh the reasons of things, and not mind swelling words.

Brethren, it is by no means a new Artifice, to talk in a very high strain, when Argument runs very low: Thus *Jews* and *Gentiles* exclaimed against our Fathers the Apostles, and the Primitive Believers, condemning them for going against Antiquity, Universality, Authority, Tradition, Philosophers, Law-makers, Kings and Nations. And yet when all was done, all this was but empty noise, and vain pretence, and the Cause of Christianity was the Cause of God. Foul Errors have been dresst with glorious appearances of Truth, and Truth has been opposed with Confidence; and God suffers it to be so, to try the Sincerity of men, that while they who are willing to be deluded, fall by the Temptation, men of Probity, and lovers of Truth, should upon diligent examination hold it faster than otherwise they would have done. This is one of the great Advantages to which that opposition tends, which Truth has met with in the World. And therefore the more lofty those pre-

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tences are, by which the other Church would bring us to an intire ſubmiſſion to her Authority in every point of Religion, ſo much greater reaſon there is to examine every one of her particulars; and if I find that ſhe is miſtaken in any of them, I am very ſure that ſhe is not infallible in all. And if ſhe will not allow me to make a Judgment of the Particulars, 'tis juſt as if a man ſhould try to hinder me from caſting up my own Accounts, by going about to prove that he cannot poſſibly miſtake in doing it; he might indeed ſhew ſome Wit in working his Demonſtration, but I ſhould ſhew a great deal more folly in truſting him.

To conclude: We have a Rule whereby to try the Doctrine, I will not only ſay of a Church, or a Pope, or a Council, but even of an Angel from Heaven, if an Angel ſhould come and Preach to us; and that Rule is the Holy Scripture; eſpecially the Writings of the Evangeliſts and Apoſtles. Theſe are by all Chriſtians acknowledged to be the undoubted, and the moſt ancient Records of our Holy Religion; and they have had a Tradition ſo uncontroulable, as no Books in the World ever had the like. Whoever therefore is our Guide, it is very reaſonable that this ſhould be our Rule. And of all Churches in the World, I will never truſt my

my ſelf to her diſcretion, that will not truſt me with the Knowledg and Study of this Rule.

Here we may, if we pleaſe, make our ſelves very ſure, that we are of thoſe whom God will juſtifie; for here we may diſcern what kind of perſons St. *Paul* and the Chriſtians of whom he ſpeaks in this place, and what all the Apoſtles, and Primitive Diſciples of our Lord, were. For thoſe Books which acquaint us with their Names, and which were written by ſome of themſelves, do alſo diſcover to us what Faith they profeſs'd, what Doctrine they taught, and what Lives they led. Now if we profeſs that very Faith, and teach no other Doctrine, and frame our practiſe by their Rules and good Examples, then without all queſtion, we are ſuch kind of Chriſtians as they were; and then altho we ſhould be uſed by the world, as they were too, yet the encouragement and comfort which they had, will alſo belong to us; and we too may ſay, *Who ſhall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? it is God that juſtifieth, who is he that condemneth? it is Chriſt that died, yea rather, that is riſen again.*

Having therefore the Infallible Rule of God's Word, whereby to guide our ſelves, *We beſeech you, Brethren, and exhort you by the Lord Jeſus, that as ye have received of us,*

us, how you ought to walk, and to pleaſe God, ſo ye would abound more and more; that while evil men and ſeducers ſhall wax worſe and worſe, deceiving and being deceived, ye may continue in the things which ye have learned, knowing of whom ye have learned them, even from the Sayings of our Lord Jeſus, and his holy Apoſtles, delivered to us in the Scriptures, which are *able to make us wiſe unto ſalvation, through faith which is in Chriſt Jeſus.* Let us remember, that *it had been better for us, not to have known the way of righteouſneſs, than after we have known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to us*; not forgetting by any means, that 'tis a *way of righteouſneſs* we have been made to *know*, and an holy Commandment that hath been *delivered to us*, from which therefore we may depart as damnably by an impure Converſation, as by letting go our pure Profeſſion; in which caſe we are ſo far from being juſtified, that we ſhall be the more condemned by our Faith: We have no falſe Principles to ſave our hearts from condemning us, if we allow our ſelves in any way of wickedneſs; and *God is greater than our hearts, and knoweth all things*: Whoever elſe condemns us, that is more than recompence enough; if God juſtifieth. But who is he that ſhall juſtifie us, if God condemns?

FINIS.

THE

SUMM

OF A

CONFERENCE

On *Feb.* 21, 1686.

BETWEEN

Dr. *Clagett*, and Father *Cooden*,

About the Point of

TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

LONDON,
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The SUM of a CONFERENCE On *Feb.* 21. 1686. BETWEEN Dr. *Clagett*, and Father *Gooden*, About the POINT of TRANSUBSTANTIATION.

Introduction.

IT *will perhaps appear to ſome a little* ſtrange, *that I do not ſay almoſt* Incredible, *that there ſhould have paſs'd a* Conference *above two years ſince, in which Mr.* Gooden *was concern'd, and the World yet to learn the Subſtance of it. The Vanity of that Gentleman to thruſt himſelf upon all Occaſions into* Diſputes *with the* moſt Learned

Men *of our* Church *first, and then to boast of his own Performances in them, was so great, that there is scarce a* Coffee-house *in the* Town *that has not been filled with the Noise of his Impertinent Vapours. And if those of the* Other Communion *have been always remarkable for an* Assurance *becoming the* pretended Infallibility *of their* Church; *I may venture to say, that next to* Father P— *the* Jesuit, *and his friend Mr.* M——, *I scarce know any among them that have ever talk'd so loud, or made such* Heroical Defiances *of the* Champions *and* Armies *of our* Israel, *in all Places, and upon all Occasions, as Mr.* Gooden *these late Years has done among us. But thus* shallow Waters *always run with the Greatest* Noise *and* Violence; *and* little Sophisters, *who either want* Capacity *to see into their own* Fallacies, *or think they have forehead enough to carry that off with* Clamour *and* Confidence *which they cannot do by* Reason *and* Argument, *delight to expose themselves and their Religion to the most dangerous Tryals; whilst Men of* Learning *and* Judgment *are modest and ingenuous, and know it to be neither for the* Honour *of their* Church, *nor their own* Reputation, *to challenge all Mankind to answer* Paradoxes, *and to shew that not to be* Demonstration,

which

which when brought to the Tryal is hardly See Mr. G's. Pap. p. 10.
ſence.

I hope this will not be thought too ſevere a Reflection *on the late* Pretenders *of this kind among us, which I ſpeak out of a juſt reſpect to the more Learned and Charitable Perſons of the* Church *of* Rome; *who have been no leſs Scandalized at theſe forward Zealots, than our ſelves; and to whom I ought to give this Teſtimony, That during a long acquaintance with many of them, I never met with any thing of the* Vanity *of thoſe I have before mentioned. Our* Differences *in matters of* Religion, *made no Diſturbance either in our* Friendſhip *or* Converſation *with One Another. If the diſcourſe at any time led to a* Controverſie *of* Faith, *we argu'd it upon the ſame Principles, and with the ſame* Calmneſs, *that we did any other* Subject *whatſoever; by Arguments drawn from the* Authority *of the* Holy Scriptures, *or from the* Teſtimonies *of the* Ancient Fathers, *as the* Nature *of the thing required us to do. If theſe did not* Convince, *they never flew off to the* Common-Place Topic's *of the* Authority *and* Infallibility *of the* Church; *much leſs to that Exploded refuge of* Oral Tradition; *but the* Controverſie *Ended. And when all was done, they were content to hope well*

of those of our Church, *who being sincere in their Enquiries, and willing to be led by Truth wherever it was, still continued to differ from them. Instead of calling Us* Hereticks *or* Schismaticks, *or Thundring out* Damnation *against Us as such, a mutual* Charity *concluded the discourse. We hoped and prayed for the Conviction of the* Erring Party, *which ever it was; but made no question, but that the same Heaven might receive us All, tho we should continue to disagree to the last.*

But this was not the Temper of Mr. Gooden, *and the rest of the little Herd of that* Church, *who gave so much Trouble and Disturbance to their own and the Nations repose; and have contributed what in them lies by their Heat and Folly, to ruine both themselves and us.*

As for the Occasion *of the present* Conference, *it was this. A* Gentlewoman *of a Good Estate, and intimately acquainted with divers R. Cs. was by a frequent Conversation with them, wrought up by degrees into an Extraordinary Opinion of the advantages of a* Recluse Life, *for the better performing the* Exercises of Religion; *Insomuch that the desire she began to have for such a sort of retirement, made her almost willing to leave our* Church, *and go*

over

over to the Roman Com munion; *but that she still look'd upon their* Doctrine, *in those points wherein t hey differ from us, to be False, and Dange rous, and to one so perswaded as she was,* Destructive *of* Salvation.

Being thus pr epared for their Seduction; *they let slip no Opportunity to finish their work, a nd gain their Proselyte. For which purpos e, care was taken, first by one of Her Ac quaintance, to represent to Her all the Pc opular* Pretences *of that* Church, *by which many are* Prejudiced *in Favour of it; an d the* Advantages *it Had, in point of* An tiquity, Unity, Universality, Infallibilit y, *and what not, beyond Ours; and the n, in the next place, to get* Father C ooden *brought to Her, as one that would give Her a fuller satisfaction in all these matters, if she would but afford him the Opportunity of Discoursing with Her. And to the End his* Arguments *might make the deeper Impression upon Her, it was thought fit to set forth the Priest to Her, not in the Glorious* Idea *of the Great* Master *of* Demonstration, *one who had devoured all Mr. I. Ss.* Principles, *and was thereby become such a Mighty Man of Controversy, that none of our* Divines *durst Cope with him; He in whose hands the* Dean of Pauls

himself was nothing
that in a few lines
said or written in fa
(which was a greater t
ter's answering in a few
and Sermons that had e
preach'd against them);
Character of a Country
inconsiderable man amongst t
Dress was accommodated to h
that so under this disguise he
with the greater Advantage to

who had a certain Paper
baffled all that could be
our of the Reformation
ingt han the Represen-
sheets all the Books
er been publish'd or
but in the humble
Priest, a little,
bem; and his
's Character,
might talk
er.

But Mr. Gooden forgetting
he had put on, presently fell into
strain. He began to talk of noth
Infallibility, Antiquity, Demonstra
That all the Fathers and Councils we
their side: That he had baffled our m
considerable Divines, and particularly t
Dean of Pauls; who had in truth all o
them so little to say for themselves when he
came amongst them, that he desired nothing
more to convince her of the Truth of their
Doctrines, than that she would pitch upon
some Point, and bring one of our Men to
meet him, and she should see what work he
would make with him.

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Such a noise as this from one of the lit-
tle, inconsiderable Priests of the Church of
Rome, amazed the poor Lady: and had he
prudently

prudently contented himself with the Boast *of the* Victories *he had already gain'd, without aspiring after the Honour of adding one more for the increasing his* Triumph, *he might possibly have saved himself from the shame of that discovery the following* Conference *made of his Abilities, and have gain'd his* Proselyte. *But as great Wits are too often a little inconsiderate; and, before they are aware, run themselves into difficulties, out of which they cannot tell afterwards how to extricate themselves; so it fell out with Mr.* Gooden *on this Occasion. For the* Lady *presently took hold on his Offer, and applied her self to Dr.* Clagett; *and the* Time, *and* Place, *and* Subject *being fix'd, Mr.* Gooden *and the* Doctor *met accordingly at* Grays-Inn, *Feb.* 21. 1686.

I shall say nothing of the Menage of the Conference *its self, but that it was with much* Noise *on Mr.* Gooden's *side; who in Discourse let fall some very extraordinary things, and which might have pass'd into the* Abstract *too, had not another Person who was with him, and seem'd much more modest and understanding than himself, observed what pass'd, and corrected his Blunders.*

After the Dispute *was ended, which lasted about Four or Five Hours, a new*

Discourse

Diſcourſe aroſe about the Paper *which Mr.* Gooden *made ſuch Boaſts of about the* Town, *and had ſo often repreſented to the* Lady *and others, as unanſwerable. He was very unwilling a great while to let the* Doctor *have a* Copy *of it, tho he promiſed to give him an* Anſwer *to it; till at laſt it was declared, That if he refuſed to let him have it, the Company would look upon it as an* idle Paper, *that had* nothing in it, *and that therefore he durſt not truſt him with it. Upon this he gave him a* Copy *of it, and the* Doctor *in purſuance of his Promiſe, the next day ſent him the following* Anſwer *to it.*

For what concerns the Sum *of the* Conference *here Publiſhed, it was taken in Writing, and ſigned by both Parties upon the place; ſo that there can be no cauſe for any one to queſtion the ſincerity of it: And tho the Abſtract be very ſhort, yet I am perſwaded it is enough to ſatisfie every impartial* Reader, *why Mr.* Gooden *did not care to make any boaſts of it. And thoſe who were preſent at the Meeting, and heard all that paſs'd between them, as well as the* Lady *for whoſe ſake they met, were very well ſatisfied that he would not force them to publiſh the Hiſtory of it.*

But

But tho the Doctor *was willing to let this matter die, and ſhew'd himſelf as careful of Mr.* Gooden's *Reputation after the* Conference, *as he was of the* Ladies *Conviction in it; yet being now by the Providence of God removed from us, I thought it a juſt debt to his Memory, to ſubjoin here a true* Copy *of theſe Papers, there being ſeveral of them abroad, both to prevent an imperfect* Edition *from ſome other hand; and leaſt Mr.* Gooden *and his Friends, who were ſo ſilent in his* Life-*time, ſhould take occaſion to raiſe any falſe Reports of this Encounter, if they thought they could not be diſproved now he is dead. And if the great Eſteem I had for that* Excellent Perſon, *and moſt uſeful Inſtrument of* God's *Service, in our late dangerous and critical Times, does not render me a very incompetent judg of whatever comes from his hand, the* Reader *will find even in theſe ſhort* Notes, *enough to reward his Pains, and to keep him from thinking the time loſt that he ſhall pleaſe to ſpend in the peruſal of them.*

W. W.

A

Private Conference

BETWEEN

Dr. *Clagett*, and Father *Gooden*,

ABOUT

Transubstantiation, &c.

FAther *Gooden* Propoſed the *Rule of Faith*, to be the Subject of the Conference, but upon the Requeſt of the Lady, for whoſe ſake they met, the Queſtion of *Tranſubſtantiation* was taken.

And the Father deſiring that the *Doctor* would be the *Opponent*, the *Queſtion* was Stated on both Sides.

Dr. That the *Doctrine* of *Tranſubſtantiation* is *falſe Doctrine*; and, That the *Natural Body of Chriſt* is not in the *Sacrament*, but in *Heaven*.

Fa. That

Fa. That after the *Words* of *Consecration*, the *true Body* and *Blood* of *Christ* are in the *Holy Eucharist*, and that the *manner* is well expreſt by *Tranſubſtantiation.*

Dr. This is not all the *Doctrine* of *Tranſubſtantiation* in the *Church of Rome.* The *Doctrine* of the *Church* of *Rome is this*, That the *Subſtance* of the *Bread* is *chang'd* into the *Subſtance of Chriſt's Body*: and the *Subſtance* of the *Wine* is chang'd into the *Subſtance of Chriſt's Blood*; which *Change* the *Church* of *Rome* does conveniently call *Tranſubſtantiation.*

Now againſt this I thus argue,

If the *Subſtance* of *Bread remains* in the *Euchariſt*, then it is not *chang'd* into the Subſtance of *Chriſt's Body*;

But the *Subſtance* of *Bread remains* in the *Euchariſt*:

Therefore the *Subſtance* of *Bread* is not *changed* into the *Subſtance* of *Chriſt's Body.*

Fath. I deny the Minor (viz) that the *ſubſtance of Bread does remain.*

Dr. If *Bread remains*, the *ſubſtance* of *bread remains.*

But *Bread remains.*

Therefore the *ſubſtance of bread remains.*

Fa. If

Fath. If the *Nature* of *Bread remains*, *Bread remains*; but if only the *Name* of *Bread* and *Species remain*, then *Bread* does *not remain.*

Dr. That *Bread* which is properly *Natural Bread*, *remains* in the *Euchariſt*, is proved from 1 Cor. 11. 26. *As often as ye eat this Bread and drink this Cup, ye do ſhew forth the Lord's death till he come.* 1 Cor. 10. 16. *The Bread which we break, is it not the Communion of the Body of Chriſt?* Now from hence we argue thus: If that which is here ſaid to be *Broken*, and to be the *Communion of the Body of Chriſt*, be *properly natural Bread*, then that which is *properly natural Bread*, remains in the *Euchariſt.*

Fath. I grant the *Major.*

Dr. But that which is here ſaid to be *broken*, and to be the *Communion of the Body of Chriſt*, is *properly natural Bread*,

Ergo: *Properly natural Bread* remains in the *Euchariſt.*

Fath. I deny the *Minor.*

Dr. The *Bread* of which Saint *Paul* ſpeaks, is *Bread* that may be *broken*, and therefore it is *truly* and *properly natural Bread.*

Fath. I

Fath. I distinguish the *Antecedent*; as to the *Accidents* and *Appearance* of *Bread* it may be *broken*; as to the *Nature* of *Bread* it *cannot*, because it is not there.

Dr. This is to beg the *Question*; for the *Question* is, whether *Bread* be there or not? and the *Argument* to prove that it is there, is, Because Saint *Paul* speaks of *Bread* that might be, and was *broken*; but it is no sufficient *Answer* to this, to say that the *Accidents* of *Bread* may be *broken*, because the *Bread* is not there it self, which is the *thing* that was disproved.

Fath. The *Question* to be proved was, that the *Nature* of *Bread* was there; therefore it is not a begging of the *Question*, according to the *Distinction* given, to say that the *Nature of Bread is not there*, and consequently could not be *broken*: For the *Bread* there spoken of, is not meant of *Natural Bread*, but of *Bread* which *came down from Heaven*, and which is the *flesh of Christ*, John 6. 41. *I am the bread which came down from Heaven.* John 6. 48. *I am the bread of Life*, Ver. 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 56, 58. From whence I infer my *Answer* to be good; that though the *H. Eucharist* be called *Bread* and *broken* as to the *Species* of *Bread*; yet it is not *natural Bread*, but only in *appearance*, of which St. *Paul*

St. *Paul* ſpoke for the ſame St. *Paul*, 1 Cor. 11. ſpeaking of the ſame bread, ſaith, *He that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh Damnation to himſelf, not diſcerning the body of our Lord.* Chriſt alſo ſpeaking of the ſame bread, ſaith, *Take, eat, this is my Body*, Matt. 26. 26. Alſo Luk. 22. 19. ſpeaking of the ſame Euchariſt, *This is my Body which is given for you.*

Dr. The *Anſwerer* forgetting the Part of a *Diſputant*, has pretended to prove largely by the *ſixth Chap. of* St. John, and other places of *Scripture*, That St. *Paul* in the aforementioned places, did not ſpeak of *Bread properly ſo called*, although he ſpoke of *Bread* that was to *be broken.* All which places, when it is my turn to *Anſwer*, I will conſider particularly.

But if that which is here ſaid is to go for an *Anſwer*, the force of it lies in this, That by the *Bread* which St. *Paul* ſpoke of, we are to underſtand the *Bread* which St. *John* ſpoke of, namely, the *bread which came down from Heaven*; by which the *Anſwerer* underſtands the *Natural* and *proper fleſh of Chriſt.*

But that the *Bread* which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of cannot be the *natural fleſh of Chriſt*, I prove thus;

The *Bread* which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of, was *broken.*

But the *Natural Body of Chriſt* cannot *be broken.*

Ergo. The *Bread* which St. *Paul* ſpeaks of cannot be the *Natural body of Chriſt.*

Fath. As to the *Species* and *Appearance* of *Bread* it was *broken*, I grant it; as to any *Nature* contained under thoſe *Species of Bread*, I deny it.

Dr. This *Diſtinction* does not avoid the *Argument*, becauſe if the *Bread* in St. *Paul* and the *Bread* in St. *John* are really and properly the ſame, and the *Bread* in St. *John* be really and properly the *fleſh of Chriſt*, then what is affirmed of the one, muſt be true of the other, and therefore if the *Bread be broken* in St. *Paul*, then the *Natural body of Chriſt* muſt be *broken* too; which cannot be.

I add further, That if by *breaking of Bread* St. *Paul* means *breaking* the *Accidents of Bread* onely and if the *Bread* that is *broken* be *really* that which is ſpoken of in St. *John* as aforeſaid; it follows alſo that the *Accidents of Bread* are *properly the body of Chriſt.*

Fath. That which St. *Paul* calls *Bread*, had in it both the *Accidents* of *Bread* and the *ſubſtance* of *Chriſts body.* As to the *Acci-*

Accidents of *Bread*, it might be *broken*; as to the *ſubſtance* of *Chriſt's body* which is mentioned in St. *John*, it is not *broken*, unleſs you mean as *Chriſt's Body* was broken upon the *Croſs*.

"*And if the bread which is broken be* "*really that which is ſpoken of in* St. John "*as aforeſaid, both as to the Accidents and* "*nature of Bread, I grant, that the Acci-* "*dents of Bread would be the Body of Chriſt,* "*and if it be not the ſame, both as to the* "*Nature and Accidents, I deny it.*

This I profeſs not to underſtand.

Fath. As to the *Doctors* Argument it includes a *Sophiſm*, as will appear when brought into form, becauſe it involves 4 *Terms*; becauſe he *ſuppoſes* in one *Propoſition* for the *Accidents* of *Bread* and in the other for the *Nature*.

Dr. In the *Argument* I uſed, I went upon this *Suppoſition*, That the *Accidents* of *Bread* were onely to be underſtood, as the *Anſwerer* ſuppoſes, and therefore I have not confounded the *Nature* and the *Accidents* of *Bread* together. Beſides, the Diſtinction between the *Nature* of *Bread* and the *Accidents* of *Bread*, was not to be remembred any more by the *Anſwerer*, becauſe I proceed upon his *Suppoſition*, That the *Accidents* onely are *broken*.

Now if St. *Paul* ſpeaks of nothing but what is *broken*, and *Accidents* onely are *broken*, and yet if he ſpeaks of the *very fleſh of Chriſt* too, then the *Accidents* of the *Bread* are the *very fleſh of Chriſt*.

And whereas the *Anſwerer* by his laſt *Anſwer*, means the *Nature of Chriſt's Body*, as he ſays, I underſtood him of the Nature of Bread. And now once more I deſire him to ſhew me where the four *Terms* are.

Fath. The *Text* of St. *Paul*, the Dr. takes for his Medium, and argues from a double *Suppoſition*, as firſt, taking it for the *Accidents of Bread* which were *broken*, and afterwards for the *ſubſtance of Chriſt's Body* under the *Accidents*, in which latter ſenſe it ſignifies the ſame that is meant by our Saviour in St. *John*.

Dr. I obſerve the *Anſwerer* will allow nothing to be *broken* but *Accidents*; I obſerve alſo, that nothing is ſaid to be the *Body of Chriſt*, or the *Communion of the Body of Chriſt*, but what is *broken*; If therefore nothing is *broken* but *Accidents*, then *Accidents* are either, according to the Anſwerer's long proof, the *very Body of Chriſt*; or according to the *Apoſtle*, the *Communion of the Body of Chriſt*.

But neither are the *Accidents* of *Bread*, the *Body of Chriſt*, nor the *Communion of the Body*

Body of Chriſt. And this, I ſay, is not anſwered, and believe will not be anſwered by any man that maintains, that St. *Paul* does not here ſpeak *properly of Bread.*

Fath. All along in my Diſcourſe I have ſuppoſed, that when St. *Paul* ſpeaks of this *bread*, he ſpoke of the *H. Euchariſt*, in which were contained both the *Accidents* of *Bread*, and the *true body of Chriſt.* How the *Dr.* has diſproved this *Doctrine* ſo clearly as to juſtifie the *Reformation*, I underſtand not; Becauſe, I conceive no private Perſons, or particular Church, ought to pretend a *Reformation*, without clear evidence, whether the *Dr.* has given ſuch I leave to the conſideration of the *Readers.* And whether, having broken off from the great body of the *Univerſal Church*, and its teſtimony, he can poſſibly have any *certain Rule to arrive at Chriſtian Faith?* If *Scripture* be pretended, interpreted by a *fallible Authority*, how *Certainty* can be obtained, or why a *Socinian*, following *Scripture* for his *Rule of Faith*, is not to be believed as well as any other *Reformer* following the ſame *Rule*, I ſee not.

Signed

W. Clagett. *Peter Gooden.*

Dr. CLAGETT's Answer TO A PAPER Delivered to Him by Father GOODEN.

The Paper

ARticles of Christian Faith are Truths; Truths are Impossible to be False; Therefore Articles of Christian Faith are Impossible to be False; Therefore those who obtain Articles of the Christian Faith, must have some Rule to Acquire them by, which cannot deceive them: To a Parliamentary Protestant, the Antient Fathers cannot be such a Rule, because they are accounted Fallible; Nor Councels, because they also are accounted Fallible; Nor Scriptures sensed by a Fallible Authority, because all such Interpretations may be False; And therefore Faith cannot be Obtained by any such means. For that which is Doubtfull can only Create Opinion, which is also Doubtful; And He that doubts in Faith, (the Apostle says) is Infidelis; And a Company of Doubters are not a Church of Faithful, but a Society of such as the Apostle calls Infidels. Signed Peter Gooden.

THE

The Answer.

Pap. *Articles of Christian Faith are Truths.*

Ans. The Design of the Disputer is to prove, that we are *Doubters* and therefore *Infidels*; But never did any man begin a business more unluckily, for at the very first dash he takes it for granted, that we do *undoubtedly believe Articles of Christian Faith to be Truths*; for otherwise he ought to have proved that they are so. But there is another Misfortune he is faln into, no less than that; for his Argument to prove that we must needs be *Doubters*, is, that we want an *Infallible Rule*. Now if he is sure that we want an *Infallible Rule*, and that without such a *Rule* there can be no Faith, I am sure he does notoriously contradict himself, by supposing that we believe all *Articles of Christian Faith to be Truths*, though we have no such *Rule*. This is a very hopeful *Paper*, and like to make wise *Converts*, which ends in making us *Infidels*, and begins to prove it by an Argument; that manifestly supposes Us to be *Believers*; which also pretends that we have no *Infallible Rule*, and therefore can be sure of *no Point of Faith*; but yet manifestly supposes Us to be *Assured* of *Some* without it; which shews the *Paper* to be a trifling *Paper*, and worth no more Consideration. But because the Disputer is said to boast so much of the Argument Contained in it, I will go on with every Clause of it to Convince him, (if he does not already know it,) that there is not a Line in it, but is either false, or nothing to the purpose.

Pap. *Truths are Impossible to be False.*

Ans. By *Truths*, the *Disputer* means, the

Truth of Things, or of *Propositions*, and therefore this is a vain and fulsome saying, which does not Advance his Reasoning one jot farther than it was before: For this is no more than to say, *That which is true, is true*, and *it cannot possibly be, but truths must be truths*. I think he applies himself to us, as if we wanted not only *Christian Faith*, but *Common Sence*.

Pap. *Therefore Articles of Christian Faith are Impossible to be False.*

Ans. There is no doubt of this, supposing that they are Truths. So that the Argument he begins with being put into the right order, and into other words, is this; It is *Impossible but truths must be truths*, but *Articles of Christian Faith are Truths*; Therefore it is *Impossible but they must be Truths*. The Antient *Fathers* had made wise work with *Christianity*, if they had gone this way to work to Convert *Infidels*.

Pap. *Therefore those who obtain the Articles of the Christian Faith, must have some Rule to acquire them by, which cannot deceive them.*

Ans. This is an obscure saying, and I must make the best of it. By *obtaining Articles of the Christian Faith*, I suppose he means *believing them*, and by a *Rule by which to acquire them*, He must understand a *Rule*, or means whereby to know what the *Articles* of the *Christian Faith are*; and then his meaning is, That those who *believe* the *Articles of the Christian Faith*, must be provided of some such *Rule* or Means, to know what they are, as cannot deceive them. Now whether this be in it self true or false, it does not at all follow from what he had laid down before; For though the Truth of Things or Propositions is

so

ſo ſure, that (as he wiſely ſays) 'tis Impoſſible they ſhould be falſe, yet it does by no means follow, that the *Reaſons* upon which I believe theſe things muſt neceſſarily be as ſure as the Truth of the Things themſelves. And this I make no doubt the Diſputer was well aware of; But becauſe I am ſenſible who they are whom he deſigns to pervert by this *Paper*, and for whoſe ſake I Anſwer it, I will explain this matter by an Inſtance that will bring it down to all Capacities: If there was ſuch a man as *Henry* the 8*th*, It is certainly *Impoſſible* that there ſhould be no ſuch man; but my *Belief* that there was ſuch a *Man*, is grounded upon ſuch *Reaſons* as do not imply an abſolute Impoſſibility of the Contrary, becauſe it is grounded upon the *Teſtimony* of *Fallible men*: And yet I ſhould be very little better then a mad-man if I ſhould entertain the leaſt doubt that there was ſuch a man: which plainly ſhews, that I may have ſufficient Reaſon to believe a thing without any Evidence of the Impoſſibility of the contrary; and this is enough to overthrow his *Conſequence*. I ſhall now inquire what truth there is in the *Concluſion* it ſelf; To which end I obſerve, That there are two things which may be underſtood by thoſe words, *cannot deceive them*, either firſt, that the *Rule* it ſelf is ſo plain and certain, that no man who uſes it can be deceived by the *Rule*; or ſecondly that 'tis Impoſſible any man ſhould be miſtaken in the *Uſe* of it. If he means the former, then I ſhall ſhew him preſently, that we have ſuch a *Rule* as he ſpeaks of, and that he hath ſaid nothing to make us aſhamed of it. If he means the latter, then I ſay it is abſolutely falſe, That thoſe who

who without doubting *believe* the *Articles of the Chriſtian Faith*, muſt have ſuch a *Rule* to know what they are, as that they cannot poſſibly miſtake in the *Uſe* of it. To make which plain to every bodies underſtanding, I ſhall add another Inſtance eaſy to be Applyed; If a man skilful in *Arithmetick* hath a great many *Numbers* before him, and deſires to know what Sum they make when they are put together; he has the *Rule* of *Addition* to do it by, which *Rule* cannot deceive him. Now there are theſe two things to be obſerved farther, which I think the *Diſputer* himſelf will not deny; firſt, that it is in the Nature of the thing Poſſible, that this man may be miſtaken every time that he puts theſe ſeveral *Numbers* together, to bring them all into one *Sum*; but ſecondly, that notwithſtanding this *Poſſibility* of being miſtaken, yet after he has tryed it over and over again, he may be ſure without the leaſt doubt that he has done his work right. Even ſo we may have a *Rule* of *Faith* that cannot deceive us, and though it is not *Abſolutely Impoſſible*, that we ſhould be miſtaken in the *uſe* of it; yet we may for all that be Aſſured, and believe without the leaſt doubting, that we have learn'd what the true Faith is by that *Rule*; For all the World knows, that it is no ſufficient Reaſon to *Doubt* of any thing, that the Contrary is barely *Poſſible*.

Pap. *To a Parliamentary Proteſtant, the Antient Fathers can't be ſuch a Rule, becauſe they are Accounted fallible.*

Anſ. We never ſaid they were ſuch a *Rule*. This therefore is Impertinent.

Pap. *Nor Counſels becauſe they alſo are accounted fallible.*

Anſ.

Anſ. This is Impertinent alſo: for we never ſaid they were our *Rule of Faith.* But we have better Reaſons to give, why *Fathers and Councils* cannot be our *Rule of Faith*, than this that the Diſputer has made for us. And one is this, That we cannot make them the *Rule* of our *Faith*, but by ſo doing, we muſt depart from the *Primitive Fathers*, and the *ancient Councils*; in as much as all agree, That the *Holy Scriptures* are the *Rule of Faith*, and they made it theirs.

Pap. *Nor Scriptures ſenced by a fallible Authority, becauſe all ſuch Interpretations may be falſe.*

Anſ. This is the Place, where I ſhall tell the Diſputer, what we beleive, and why we believe it. And when I have done, I ſhall conſider whether he hath ſaid any thing in this clauſe, to ſhake our Aſſurance. We firmly believe all the *Articles of the Creed*, into the Profeſſion whereof, we have been *Baptized.* We moreover believe all other *Doctrine*, that is *Revealed in Holy Scriptures.*

The *Grounds* of this our Faith, are theſe, That in the Holy *Scriptures* are Recorded, thoſe Teſtimonies of *Divine Revelation*, by which the Doctrines therein contained, are confirmed. That theſe Teſtimonies were too notorious and Publick to be gainſaid; in ſo much that the Doctrine, built upon them, could not be overthrown by the Powers of the world engaged againſt it. That the holy Books were written by the *Inſpired Preachers* of that Doctrine, which they contain; And that for this we have the *Teſtimony of Univerſal and uncontroulable Tradition*, which is a thing credible of it ſelf. This is the Sum of that *External Evidence*, upon which our *Faith* is grounded. In aſſigning of which, I do by no means exclude

exclude that *Internal Evidence*, that ariſes from the Excellent Goodneſs of the Doctrines themſelves, which ſhews them to be worthy of God.

Now whereas this Diſputer ſays, That theſe *Scriptures* cannot be an *Infallible Rule* to us, becauſe they are *ſenſed by a fallible Authority*, that is, becauſe we, who are *fallible*, underſtand them as well as we can.

I anſwer, That no man needs to be *Infallible*, in order to the underſtanding of *plain Scripture*. I who do not pretend to *Infallibility*, am yet *certain* which is enough for me, That I do find the *Articles* of the *Creed* in the Scriptures, and many other Doctrines beſides, which I do underſtand. I am ſure that I know what theſe words of St. *John* ſignifie, *This is the Promiſe that he hath promiſed us, even eternal life*, And, *this is the love of God that we keep his Commandments*; and the like. The *Antient Fathers* thought the *Scriptures* to be ſo plain, that they argued out of them, without pretending to an *Infallible Authority* of *Interpretation*, as I will ſhew this Diſputer when he pleaſes. If nothing leſs then *Infallibility* will ſerve to underſtand, or as he ſays, *to ſenſe* words, why does this Diſputer put into my hands, this *Paper* of his; which is none of the plaineſt neither? I am ſure he does not take me to be *Infallible*, and yet I am confident he would be angry, if I ſhould ſay his *Paper* was not to be underſtood without an *Infallible Interpreter*; let him anſwer this if he can.

1 John 2. 25. And Chap. 5. 3.

The Reaſon he gives, why *Scripture ſenſed by a fallible Authority*, cannot be the *Rule of Faith*, is, becauſe, all *ſuch Interpretations may be falſe*,

That

That is to ſay, becauſe, there is a bare *Poſſibility* of any *fallible* man's miſtaking the ſenſe of plain Texts. Which kind of Reaſoning makes impoſſible, that every man ſhould come to be a Believer, unleſs himſelf be firſt Infallible. And this I ſhall Demonſtrate ſo plainly, that no man who has any ſhare of Underſtanding and modeſty ſhall be able to deny it.

There is no poſſible way, for any ſort of *Chriſtians*, to make known either the *Articles or Reaſons of Faith*, to thoſe that are yet Ignorant of them, but by words, or ſentences, written or ſpoken. He who hears or reads the words and Sentences, cannot tell either what is to *believe*, or why he ſhould *believe*, till he underſtands or (in the Diſputers Phraſe) till he *Senſes thoſe words and Sentences*; but as yet his *Authority* is but fallible; and words *ſenſed by a Fallible Authority* can never give a man *certainty*, either of the *Rule, or of the Reaſon of his Faith*; If this Diſputer be in the Right, therefore 'tis impoſſible to make him a *Believer*, unleſs you can make him *Infallible* firſt, that it may not be *Poſſible* for him, to be miſtaken, in *Senſing* the words which he hears or reads. And thus farewell, to all Advantage that any man can have by the *Infallibility* of *Popes* and *Councils*, or *Oral Tradition*, as well as by the *Scriptures*; Nay, and to all Poſſible means of arriving to *certainty* in any matter of Faith unleſs every body be *Infallible* firſt; ſo that upon ſuppoſition that God would have all men to be ſaved, and therefore to believe; it inavoidably follows from the wild Reaſoning of this man, that God has made every Man *Infallible*. But if it be evident; that men are fallible Creatures, then this

this Diſputer has Advanced a Principle the moſt deſtructive to all *certainty of Faith*, that ever was heard of in the world. But the comfort is, that 'tis ſo very abſurd that no body, well in his wits, can be miſled by it.

Pap. *And therefore Faith cannot be obtain'd by any ſuch means.*

Anſ. Which is as much as to ſay, that Faith cannot be obtain'd, till a man have the gift of *Infallibility*; And if every man has it before he can be taught to any purpoſe, what need can there be of an *Infallible Interpreter* to teach him? But, as I obſerved before; 'tis impoſſible to make *Believers* of thoſe that are not *Infallible*, unleſs the Diſputer, or his *Church*, has a way to make known the Doctrines and Reaſons of Chriſtian Faith, without words.

Pap. *For that which is doubtful can only create opinion, which is alſo doubtful.*

Anſ. Therefore ſince all words are doubtful to him that has but a *fallible Authority* to *ſenſe* them, as no man has more, before he believes; 'tis impoſſible for the Diſputers Church to create any thing more than opinion, (*which is alſo doubtful*) in thoſe whom ſhe reaches, unleſs as I have already ſaid, ſhe can make them *Infallible* firſt, and teach them afterwards. And even then there would be no need of teaching them at all, becauſe they are now *Infallible* themſelves. Of all the *Papers* that ever I read, I never met with any thing more abſurd, and contradictious than the Reaſoning of this; In which the Diſputer, out of a vehement deſire to overthrow our Faith, and the Grounds of it, has laid down *Principles* that do effectually overthrow all ways of making

men

men ſure of any thing; and in particular, the uſe of thoſe very methods by which his own Church pretends to lead men to Faith.

Pap. *And he that doubts in Faith (the Apoſtle ſaith) is* Infidelis, *and a company of Doubters are not a Church of* Faithful, *but a ſociety of ſuch as the Apoſtle calls* Infidels.

Anſ. What *Apoſtle* ſays this? if the *Diſputer* refers to *Rom.* 14. 23. as I think he does, he has ſhewn his skill in the *Interpretation* of *Scripture*, to be equal to his maſtery in *Reaſoning*. If in the *Infallible Church* they can *Interpret Scripture* no better than thus, give me the honeſty and induſtry of a *Fallible Church*, before it.

The Concluſion.

AND now after all, this *Paper* is as abſurd in the deſign, as it is in the management; for the buſineſs of it is to prove, That *Proteſtants* have no Faith, but are *Infidels*; and that by this Argument they are and muſt be *doubters*: Now whether I *doubt*, or *do not doubt*, is a *Queſtion* concerning a *matter of Fact* that I have more reaſon to know the truth of, than the Diſputer can poſſibly have; and if I know that I *do not doubt*, and he can yet prove that I *do doubt*, he is an extraordinary man indeed. For then I am ſure he can prove, That *Truth* not onely may be, but is falſe, which perhaps ſuch a man as he can Reconcile with what he ſaid at firſt, *That truths are impoſſible to be falſe.*

And this alone had been a ſufficient *Anſwer* to his *Paper*; for nothing can be more frivolous, than

than to go about to prove to a man by fine Reaſoning, that he does *doubt* of a thing, when he is as ſure, that he does *not doubt* of it, as he can be of any thing in the World. But the deſign of this *Paper* ſeems to be as *Impious*, as 'tis *Abſurd*. And that is, to bring weak Perſons to *Infidelity* firſt, that they may afterwards be ſetled upon *Romiſh Grounds*. I do acknowledg 'tis a very proper way, to bring us over to the *Church of Rome*, to make us *Infidels* firſt; But this they will not find ſo eaſy a matter; for we truſt, that we are not of thoſe *who draw back to Perdition, but of thoſe that believe to the ſaving the Soul.*

I have omitted nothing in the whole Paper, but to take notice of that little and mean Reflection, in calling the *Proteſtant*, a *Parliamentary Proteſtant*. I have told this *Diſputer*, the *Reaſon* and *Ground* of our *Faith*: If we moreover are Protected in the *Profeſſion* of it, by the *Laws* of the *Land*, I ſuppoſe 'tis no more then what he would deſire, for the Profeſſion of *Popery*; and he would think never the worſe of himſelf, for being a *Parliamentary Papiſt*.

Thus I have Anſwered this *Paper* through every clauſe of it. And I am confident deſtroy'd all that little Appearance of Reaſoning that it made. Let the *Diſputer* build it up again if he can, I promiſe him, by God's Grace, that I'le pull it down again.

FINIS.

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